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53rd Year August 28, 1998 No. 2587 $1.07

Small-town B.C. women run thriving, ecumenical VBS

CRCs, Catholics, Presbyterians, evangelicals join to reinforce children's faith

Jacky Naayer

DEROCHE, B.C.— They made an impossible task quite possible, venturing into the unknown and succeeding. A handful of women from the small town of Deroche, B.C., started a Vacation Bible School(VBS) program five years ago for local children. The program, which is still thriving, was founded with no resources to work with and no specific church's support.

The uniqueness of the project lies both in its being run and sponsored by church *members*, rather than a church institution, and in the wide ecumenicity of both those sponsoring members and the children who attend.

Brenda Stoker, a leader who has been involved since the project's first year in 1994, says, "I've been doing VBS for years and the difference is that it's not in a church and you don't have a pastor. It's just a group of ladies doing it together and a mix of denominations."

The leaders are from the Christian Reformed, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, and Alliance churches; other churches are represented in the project as well.

The five originators were involved in a Coffee Break group

See **VACATION** *page 2...*

COURTESY JACKY NAAYER

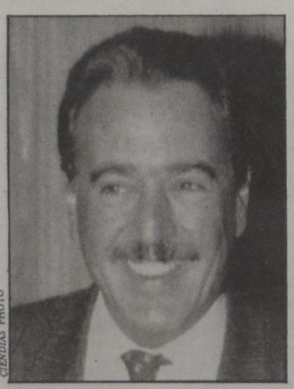
Kids join to sing lively music at the Vacation Bible School in Deroche, B.C.

Canadian agencies urge Colombian president to end violence

Alan Doerksen

TORONTO — In the past year, 156 trade union members were killed in Colombia — one out of every two killed in the world, says Bill Fairbairn, the South America co-ordinator for the Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America (ICCHRLA).

Because of this and many other human rights violations, ICCHRLA and more than 100 Canadian agencies sent a letter to Colombia's new president, Andres Pastrana, asking for drastic changes. The letter was sent August 5, the day before Pastrana's inauguration.



CP/EFDIAS PHOTO

Andres Pastrana

"During the past decade, more than 30,000 Colombians have been killed in political or socio-politically motivated violence," states the letter. "Canadians have watched with mounting horror and indignation as thousands of your country's finest sons and daughters — trade unionists ... church and human rights workers, to name but a few — have been murdered in cold blood, forcibly 'disappeared' or compelled to flee into exile following repeated death threats or attempts against their lives.... Indeed, virtually not a week goes by without hearing the tragic news of a massacre perpetrated against the civilian population."

The letter gives an example of the threat to Colombian civilians:

"In a bold and terrifying demonstration of the impunity which they enjoy, paramilitary groups frequently give advance notice of their intention to kill.... We have been told that more than 60 Colombian communities currently show 'early warning signs' of an impending massacre by paramilitary forces." These signs include threatening phone calls to trade unions or non-governmental organizations.

Government accused of inaction

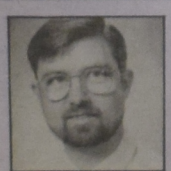
"It is imperative that your government take immediate measures to protect the threatened communities and permanently disband the paramilitary groups by apprehending, trying and punishing those who belong to, lead, organize, support or finance them," the letter demands.

The letter accuses the Colombian government of inaction and puts the blame for some of the violence on the government itself.

"There is overwhelming evidence to show that the vast majority of human rights abuses are committed by state agents or by paramilitary forces acting with the support or acquiescence of the military," the letter asserts. "For these abuses, the Colombian government, and the president — as commander-in-chief of the armed forces — are accountable."

ICCHRLA and its supporters are calling for an end to Colombia's ongoing armed conflict, and a comprehensive peace

See **CHRISTIAN** *page 2...*



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Henk Hart explains what he meant by 'timeless principles' ... p. 13

News

Vacation Bible School expands rapidly

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together, the popular women's Bible study program which was begun in the Christian Reformed Church and has since spread to many other denominations. The five women discussed the idea of holding a VBS program for one week every summer and set about to make it happen. In the first year, 60 children attended. Since then, the numbers have grown to more than 100 children every season.

One of the major reasons why this program works out despite all the differences in religious backgrounds, is because of the women's attitudes toward each other. "We accept each other, how we all are," says Theresa Schmitt, another VBS leader.

Unusual follow-up problem

Another hurdle for this unique project is follow-up. "It's easy to have a follow-up program when you have *a* church," says Brenda Stoker, "but how do you have a follow-up program when you have seven teachers and they all come from different [denominations]? Do you follow-up and just invite them to go to your own church? That's something that needs to be ironed out."

One idea being discussed is having the Mission Hills Community Church, just outside the town of Deroche, take over the VBS program and do a complete follow-up after each season. But as Brenda Stoker states, "If they based it out of Mission, you wouldn't have a lot of these people because it's a lot of driving. It would have to be held here [in Deroche]."

Getting tired but pushing on

Brenda Stoker admits that she and the other founders need a break by now. "You kind of feel like you want a break, but you can't," she says. "Somebody has to keep it going. If you would cancel it, you would have the phone ringing non-stop from a lot of parents, saying, 'Why aren't you having it?' You can't for the sake of evangelism just say No".

COURTESY JACKY NAAYER

One benefit of this kind of VBS is seen through the Coffee Break group. The parents "used to sit around and have coffee (at VBS) but now they're working because they see that we need lots of help," explains Stoker. "And that's what's neat because every year from VBS we get another one or two that join Coffee Break because they [got involved in VBS] for the week. And once they feel comfortable with you, they'll go to Coffee Break."

Such a program in such a small community also has its benefits. "I think our community is very close. I don't think you would find that anywhere else. Because even if somebody gets sick now, there are people you meet through VBS, and they bring you meals, and you take care of each other a lot," says Theresa Schmitt.

Businesses offer help

Besides VBS volunteers, others get involved as well. "Dairyland donated 2000 yogurt cups and 500 whipping cream containers. We don't say: 'What craft are we going to do?' we ask: 'How will we use these?'" says Schmitt. The VBS women also worked to get all of their cookies donated from a local restaurant owner in Dewdney, just outside of Deroche.

When asked about their budget and its limitations, Schmitt replied, "We just [manage to] stay within the budget (provided by donations from the Christian Reformed congregations). We don't really worry about it. The money's always there, somehow. We always have what we need."

Their motto, "Keeping It Simple," helps explain why these women have made the Deroche VBS program the success that it is.

Christian, labor leaders protest human rights violations

... continued from page 1

process.

The letter was signed by leaders of 57 religious groups, including many Catholic organizations, and leaders from the Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian and United churches. Some church leaders, especially Anglican and Catholic, have visited Colombia on behalf of ICCHRLA, says Fairbairn. This has helped raise those denominations' consciousness of Colombia's problems. Catholic parishes in Colombia have been actively working on human rights issues, he adds.

Not just drugs

Fairbairn observes that many Canadians believe Colombia's ongoing violence is all related to the drug trade. But he argues that the problem is much more complex than that.

For the past decade, ICCHRLA has been monitoring the human rights situation in Colombia by sending regular fact-finding missions there and publishing reports on the situation. For instance, last May, ICCHRLA sent a representative on an international delegation to support human rights workers in Colombia. Earlier this month, Eleanor Douglas, a member of ICCHRLA's board, attended a peace conference there.

COURTESY ICCHRLA

Members of ICCHRLA's most recent fact-finding delegation to Colombia. The Colombian man third from the right, a member of the Colombian Inter-Congregational Commission on Justice and Peace, has received repeated death threats.

Fairbairn notes that 26 MPs, representing all five of Canada's national political parties, signed the letter. Nineteen trade union leaders also signed, including Bob White, president of the Canadian Labour Congress, and Buzz Hargrove, president of the Canadian AutoWorkers Union.

"We've been working closely with the trade union sector in Canada," says Fairbairn. Earlier, Canadian trade unions had little contact with counterparts in Colombia, but Fairbairn says ICCHRLA has made an effort to keep the unions informed about human rights abuses affecting unionized workers in Colombia.

So far, ICCHRLA's letter has gotten no direct response from Pastrana or his government. But Fairbairn points out that David Kilgour, Canada's Secretary of State for Latin America, had a private meeting with Pastrana on August 8, at which Kilgour mentioned the letter.

Canada no longer silent

"We're encouraged he did use the letter," says Fairbairn. "Kilgour spoke with deep concern about human rights in Latin America." Kilgour is also interested in meeting with members of ICCHRLA, possibly in September, to pursue issues raised by the letter.

Such letters have encouraged the Canadian government to speak out more about human rights abuses, says Fairbairn. "Canada was silent for years" on such issues. But three years ago, ICCHRLA sent a letter to Andre Ouellet, then Foreign Affairs Minister, pressing him to speak out at the United Nations about human rights problems in Colombia. He did so, and since then, Canada has become very outspoken on these issues.

Fairbairn admits he's not sure Pastrana can make much difference in Colombia. In Pastrana's inaugural speech, for instance, he did not make a strong statement on human rights, only including one sentence on the subject.

But, asserts Fairbairn, "It's important to give this new government a strong signal [that] people will be watching."

Christian Courier faces exciting year of change

The time has come to go biweekly, says board

CC Staff

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — Last May 11, a group of interested supporters of *Christian Courier* met in St. Catharines to discuss the paper's future. The group, consisting of CC staff, board and the editorial advisory committee members, as well as outside advisors, was facilitated by Ben Vandezande, executive director of Diaconal Ministries in Eastern Canada.

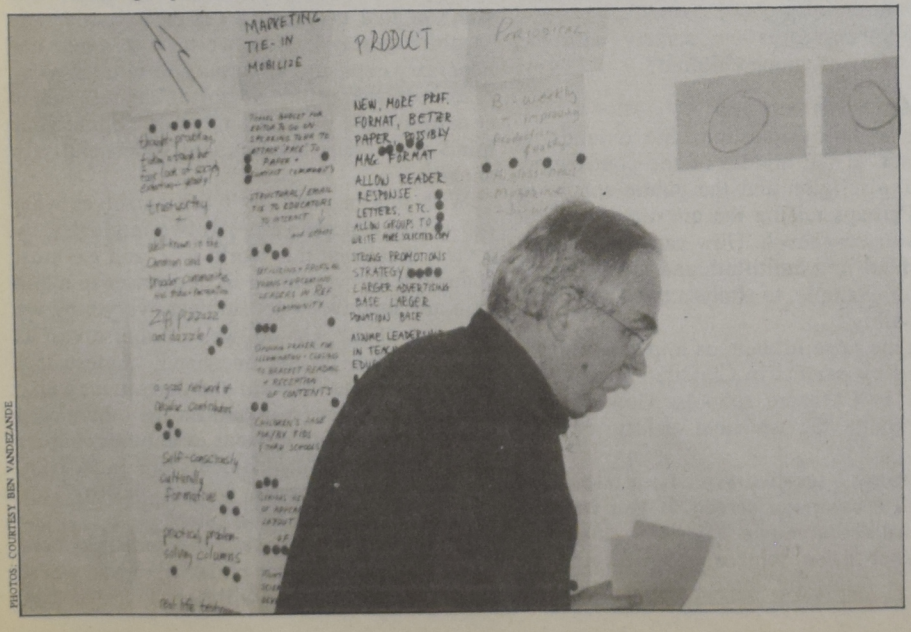
The day-long retreat came at a crucial time in CC's existence. The CC staff is on the verge of undergoing a period of transition. Publisher Stan de Jong will retire early this fall, and editor Bert Witvoet plans to retire in June 1999. In addition, as a new century is approaching readers' expectations are changing.

The May 11 meeting was prompted by questions about what CC's future would or should look like. Before the meeting CC staff members conducted a survey of 50 readers of various ages and backgrounds, asking, among other things, what they appreciate in CC, what they would like to see less of, and what they believe CC should look like in 2000.

The survey and insights which came out of the meeting covered such areas as developing marketing strategies, the need to appeal to a younger generation, keeping and sharpening our in-depth analysis, and nurturing a community of new leaders. The paper's layout and design, format, and frequency of publication were also discussed.

There was a consensus that CC should encourage interactive exchange with the community (the Web helping to make this possible); that it should try to broaden its audience beyond the Reformed community, allowing for a wide range of Christian views being expressed; that issues in general should be "boldly, lovingly," addressed, "as led by the Spirit," but that there should be a greater focus on people who embody issues rather than merely "pontificate" on them; that CC should appeal to the younger generation through sports, school activities, entertainment and the like (and hire an editor or assistant editor younger than 30); that the paper must add zip and pizzazz to its design; and that editorials should continue to offer sound, Reformed opinion.

May 11 retreat participants pay close attention to what Ben Vandezande (see photo below) is doing with their recorded group statements.



PHOTOS COURTESY BEN VANDEZANDE

Three major decisions

All of this will be further digested and, where appropriate, implemented, over time. But on August 18, the board of Reformed Faith Witness (RFW), the non-profit charitable organization which publishes *Christian Courier,* made three pivotal decisions which will set the stage for future changes.

Diane Klein of Creemore, Ont., has been appointed as promotions and marketing director of RFW and *Christian Courier.* This is the first time in CC's history that a full-time promotions and marketing director has been appointed.

Van Til to be managing editor

Secondly, Marian Van Til was appointed managing editor of the company, which means that she will take over as general manager, but she will retain many of her duties as associate editor.

Finally, starting January 1, 1999, CC will begin publishing biweekly instead of weekly.

Coming out biweekly, it is felt, will allow a greater focus on quality; will appeal to readers who have complained that a weekly offers too much to read; and will allow better allocation of staff resources.

The 'Truetype' letters

Editor Witvoet will add his touch to the transition: he has decided to write 10 special editorials in the coming year, one a month, which will address some of the issues that were important in his days, contrasted with some which may challenge the next generation. Those editorials will appear as "letters" from a senior to a junior editor (alluding to C.S. Lewis' *Screwtape Letters*).

CC's new promotions director

We are happy to announce the appointment of Diane Klein of Creemore, Ont., as promotions and marketing director of Reformed Faith Witness and *Christian Courier.*

Diane Klein is the office manager, consultant and workshop leader of Educom Consulting. She has been the marketing manager of Coastpaper, senior marketing manager for Wardair Canada Inc. and planning analyst for Air Canada.

Diane has been an active volunteer in various churches across Canada and with husband Reinder Klein is a member of the Alliston Christian Reformed Church.

We welcome Diane to our circle of co-workers.

Editorial

Society's selective concern for safety

Safety is an important issue in today's society, especially when it comes to children. I occasionally have the privilege of picking up two young boys from their school. One of them attends Kindergarten.

In order to enter the section of the school where the Kindergarten class is housed, I have to push a bell. Someone inside looks at a video monitor to see who it is and, when satisfied, pushes a button to release the lock on the door. I may enter. Next, I am asked to produce an identity document to prove that I am the person the mother said would pick up her son. Then I sign my name behind the boy's name in the class register, a teacher watches whether the child recognizes me and is comfortable with me, and then I'm allowed to take the boy to my car.

Another instance of society's preoccupation with safety: an elementary school bans all peanut butter sandwiches from kids' lunches throughout the school because there is one child in Grade 1 who is allergic to peanut butter.

Car seats for infants are a must when transporting young children. There are even rules for using one type of car seat for a child up to 17 pounds, and another one for the next weight category.

Yes, we are concerned about the safety of our children. And much of that is good and necessary. But as a Christian I notice that much of our concern is for the physical and emotional safety of children. Very little attention is being paid to their spiritual safety.

Safety of a closed-in world

When I think of the fact that adolescents are not only exposed to unhealthy sexual material, but are sexually active at increasingly younger ages, then I ask myself: Where is this pre-occupation with safety? Or is the condom the answer to a demand for safety? And what kind of safety is that? Isn't it focused first of all on preventing the physical and social consequences of the sex act? Is there such a thing as "safe sex" when you're talking about unmarried teenagers?

But isn't it strange that our collective safety concerns are easily pushed aside when it comes to serving the interest of self, or the profit motif, rather than the cause of justice and mercy? What kind of safety is there for unborn children? What kind of safety does the government focus on when it promotes gambling? What safety concerns for Natives and wildlife are being considered when there is talk about two more power dams in Labrador, dams that will cause the massive flooding of lands?

Our society's concern for safety is a selective concern, indeed. I'm convinced that it is often guided by a view that this world is the ultimate destination and our only source of pleasure and security.

How preoccupied is our society with the *spiritual* safety of young children?

Be careful with screens

That is a thorny question, and it lands us right smack in the middle of the controversy surrounding religion and the public sphere in society. Perhaps raising the question does not interest you very much. How can we expect a public school in a multifaith and multicultural society, for example, to address the question of spiritual safety?

But let me raise it, then, as a question to be considered by parents in Christian homes and educators in Christian schools. How serious are we about the spiritual safety of our children?

In my mind I see two screens: a television screen and a computer screen. If you want to add a third — a movie screen — go right ahead. What these screens are offering our children in terms of entertainment must be considered highly dangerous. And I'm not just talking about the contents of programs and movies, either. We hear about Internet addiction and we know about time wasted in front of TV sets.

What these visual sources of stimulation do is isolate us from each other, especially computer screens which people watch by themselves. To add to the isolation phenomenon, we see persons hooked up to walkmans or stereos with headsets. Goodbye family; goodbye world. We are into another world, all by ourselves. We can't share what we experience. Much of it is mind-numbing anyway. What do you say to someone else after listening to and watching Madonna's packaged format of music and quick-paced images?

Books can isolate a person, too, but usually one can share with others the riches a slow-paced form of entertainment provides, especially when the fascination depends on content, not form.

I know one Christian family with four children ranging in age from about 12 to 17, who does not have a television set in the home. Wow! I applaud these parents. Our own family allowed a limited use of television when our children were young, with periodic abstinence. But that was the '70s and early '80s. Television has changed considerably, and not entirely for the better.

Safety where your heart is

I'm not advocating that our prescription for safety has to take on a world-flight approach. In a real sense, this is a dangerous world partly because the danger lurks inside of us. Satan has no power over us unless we allow him to. But spiritual safety concerns are valid, and some of that may be expressed in avoidance. In order to stay healthy we have to avoid unnecessary exposure to germs and viruses. Why place yourself in the stream of exhaust fumes coming from a passing bus? Why pollute your mind with inane sitcoms and superficial talk shows?

With this in mind, let's ask ourselves what *our* safety concerns are. Are we motivated by a view that says: this world is it, and we must somehow do everything in our power to avoid pain and inconvenience and get everything we can out of it? Or do we see ourselves as pilgrims who, on the one hand, confess that this is our Father's world and that we may take our rightful place in it, and on the other, keep in mind that we are citizens of another country and that our real investments are in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy and thieves do not break in and steal.

There is no better answer to your safety concerns than putting your children's heart where their heavenly treasure will be! **BW**

Christian Courier

Formerly known as Calvinist Contact
Founded in 1945

An independent weekly that seeks to:
- *report on significant events in the Christian community and the world;*
- *express opinions infused by Scripture and rooted in a Reformed perspective;*
- *provide contact for the Christian community.*

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Letters

Wait for the final word in science

Don Baxter, in his letter of June 26, states that his authority for his interpretation of the scriptural judgment on homosexual behavior is the report adopted by Synod 1973. He then proceeds to argue that this report is flawed, in that the medical opinions on which it was allegedly based changed shortly after the report was adopted.

That is exactly the problem when we base our views on human documents and on "scientific" opinions rather than on Scripture. It is very obvious that these can be, and often are, flawed.

How many times has scientific research not changed the prevailing views of doctors, especially in the field of human behavior and psychiatry? This area (as well as many others, such as the whole subject of origins) is constantly in flux. Often the researchers are intent, not on truth, but on proving themselves right. We see this especially regarding evolution. The scientific method is to try to *dis*prove a theory. If this cannot be done, then the theory gains respectability. But the subjective nature of much research is to prove a theory by trying to find evidence for it. This often leads to erroneous conclusions which later have to be retracted.

But Scripture is not like that. It is fully reliable, especially where it speaks about God's holiness, what he considers to be sin, and his judgment thereon. The words used by the Holy Spirit in Romans 1 about homosexual behavior are also unmistakable: impurity, degrading, shameful, unnatural, lust, indecent, perversion, depraved. "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman, that is detestable.... Such persons must be cut off from their people," we read in Leviticus 18:22-29).

Therefore the attempt to bring Scripture and "science" together insofar as possible can happen only when the final word has clearly been spoken on a subject, such as, for example, that the earth is an orb and does not have "ends" in the literal sense of the word. In all other instances, the clear, literal words of Scripture must govern to give us clarity as to what God's will for us is.

Martin H. Kaldeway
Brockville, Ont.

Don't capitulate to spirit of age

Adrian Peetoom no longer feels uneasy about couples who live together before, or without, marriage (CC, July 31, 1998). He suggests that, since traditional "rules" are now often breached, they probably should be abandoned.

The Scriptures reveal that sexuality is a marvelous gift of God, intended as a source of joy, fulfilment and the perpetuation of the human race. But like all God's gifts, it can also turn into a powerful, destructive force if it is not restrained and kept within the bounds revealed to us in the Scriptures. In matters of sex many of us stumble and fall, and none of us is without sin.

The good news is that God is gracious and that he has surrounded our sexuality with the norms and boundaries of the institution of marriage. I am persuaded that the church, guided by the Scriptures, is right in teaching that God has designed sexual relations to be confined to the marriage bond between one man and one woman.

Rather than further diminishing the institution of marriage as is now occurring all around us with devastating effects on families and especially on children, we need to resist an increasingly popular belief that institutions are infinitely malleable and our behavior is not bound to any transcendent norms.

I think Adrian should reconsider his advice. Instead of capitulating to the spirit of the age, we should help one another, especially our children, to be faithful also in the way we respond to the gift of our sexuality.

That's why, with the inspired author of Psalm 51, we and our children should pray that God will create a pure heart and renew a steadfast spirit within us.

Harry Antonides
Willowdale, Ont.

Some of us rummage in Anglican churches

As a Reformed reader living in a small predominantly evangelical town, I devour CC's "Reformed" content.

What does that mean, you may ask. A random sampling of CC reveals that "Reformed" writing entails many different perspectives.

What it means to me is reading news from across the world; articles about ecology, education, public policy, and ecumenical endeavors; frank discussion about where we screwed up and how God heals. And grounding it all, a sense that I can sit down with any of CC's columnists and engage in a passionate debate over a cup of strong coffee.

I enjoy a critical edge. I appreciate your examination of complex issues without resorting to formulaic solutions as well as your gentle caution against a spirit of judgmental Calvinism.

Your editorials "Set your mind on heavenly trees" (May 22) and "It ain't easy for Jars 'R Us to break" (July 3) especially touched me. In the latter editorial you called my generation "scavengers for Christ." You could say that young adults like myself define themselves as Reformed while rummaging around for truths in other traditions and actively seeking out relationships with people of evangelical or liturgical communities.

I was interested by your musing on why so many young adults join the Evangelical church. May I suggest that you also interview the many who worship with Anglican churches? I look forward to the discussion.

Margaret Van Dyke
Rosebud, Alta.

No healing necessary

In response to Harry Antonides' contention that ex-gay testimonials coming out of Exodus and New Directions are examples of "the healing touch of a gracious God," I would suggest that in fact they illustrate the power of the conscious mind to suppress information that cannot be properly digested, often because the outer environment is simply too hostile.

If there is evidence of God's grace in the Christian homosexual experience, it is in the courage he gives to his gay and lesbian sons and daughters to affirm his love for them in the face of discrimination, hatred, violence and misinformation.

Perhaps if more gays and lesbians in the Christian Reformed Church were taught that Jesus loves them precisely as they are, they wouldn't feel the need to deny their natural, God-given sexual orientation to seek 'healing' from what is in essence a gift.

Those who discover this truth the hard way, having to discover God's love through the furnace of recrimination and persecution, have an important message for the rest of us: God's love is unconditional. He loves us precisely as we are.

Michael Geisterfer
Aylmer, Quebec

Looking for contact people

The July 31 articles "A light to India" by Dan Wooding, "Canadian family in India" by Alan Doerksen, and "Are you afraid" by Jan Johnson were of particular interest here at the Seafarers Centre.

We meet many people from India and often try to follow through with some we come in contact with.

If any of the people about whom the articles were written were interested in helping to do this it would be much appreciated. Right now we are looking for a church in Bombay to send a man to for follow-up work.

Is it possible to put us in contact with them? Perhaps some of your readers can provide us with church addresses in India as well.

Thank you for your co-operation.

George Couperus
The Seafarers Centre
Montreal, Que.

Natural jargon

Pastor to parishioner: "We can meet either in the sanctity of your home or in the profanity of the donut shop."

Christian Courier

Member of Canadian Church Press and Evangelical Press Association.
Canada mail: Publications Mail Registration No. 0451. Postage paid at St. Catharines, Ont. Postmaster: send address changes to Christian Courier, 4-261 Martindale Rd. St,. Catharines, Ont. L2W 1A1.
U.S. mail: Christian Courier (USPS 518-090). Second-class postage paide at Lewiston, NY. Postmaster: send address changes to Christian Courier, Box 110, Lewiston, NY, 14092.

Subscriptions:	**Canada**	**U.S.A.**
(effective Feb. 1, 1995)	(GST incl.)	(GST free)
one year (44 issues)	$43.50	$35.00 U.S.
two years (88 issues)	$82.00	$66.00 U.S.
three years (132 issues)	$123.00	$99.00 U.S.
overseas one year	$135 airmail	$85.00 surface mail

Advertising deadlines: display advertising: Wednesday, 8:30 a.m.; classified advertising: Thursday, 8:30 a.m. All deadlines are for the following week's issue. See classified pages for more details. Advertising rate sheets available.
(ISSN 1192-3415) Published weekly on Fridays except for Feb. 27. April 10, June 12, July 10, Aug. 14, Oct. 2, Nov. 27, and Dec. 25.
Address all correspondence to: 4-261 Martindale Rd. St,. Catharines, Ont. L2W 1A1, Tel: 905-682-8311 or fax: 905-682-8313, e-mail: subscriptions: ccsubscrip@aol.com, advertising: ccadverts@aol.com
PRINTED IN CANADA

News/Column

Ads promoting change for homosexuals swiftly condemned by gay leaders

SEATTLE, Wash. (EP) — A series of newspaper advertisements in the U.S. which promote the idea that homosexuals can leave that lifestyle and become heterosexuals brought swift condemnation from homosexual leaders and reaction from the White House.

An ad appearing in the *New York Times* July 13 featured the story of Anne Paulk, former lesbian and wife of Exodus board chair John Paulk. "I'm living proof that the truth can set you free," the ad said. Both Anne and her husband left the homosexual lifestyle; they have been married for six years and have a one-year-old son.

The ad also depicted a crowd of men and women. "Thousands of ex-gays like these have walked away from their homosexual identities," the ad said. "While the paths each took into homosexuality may vary, their stories of hope and healing through the transforming love of Jesus Christ are the same."

Similar ads ran in the *Washington Post* and *USA Today*. The August 17 issue of *Newsweek* addressed the issue in a cover story asking: "Gay for Life?"

'Whole and happy'

The idea that homosexuals can change was met with swift condemnation by homosexual advocacy groups. The Human Rights Campaign published a full-page ad in *USA Today* July 15 describing homosexuals as "whole and happy."

Winnie Stachelberg, political director for the group, said, "We want to make it clear that homosexuality is okay, that gay and lesbian people have parents who love them and can even be people of faith."

White House spokesperson Mike McCurry said the ads could create a climate in which bigots feel comfortable, and said President Clinton was very concerned about efforts to legislate "an acceptance of intolerance and discrimination against gays and lesbians."

A bigoted view?

The ads also brought criticism from the Religious Leadership Roundtable, a new organization with strong ties to the Interfaith Alliance, which in turn is closely identified with the National Council of Churches (NCC).

Leaders of the roundtable held a July 24 press conference in which the ads were denounced as "evil," "destructive," "simplistic ignorance," and filled with "language of violence and hatred."

But the Institute for Religion and Democracy (IRD) challenged the roundtable, noting that most of its supporting denominations have teachings that disapprove of homosexual acts, while affirming the dignity of homosexual individuals.

"This involvement of the Interfaith Alliance in justifying homosexual practices, and in stigmatizing any who disapprove of them as hate-filled bigots, raises serious questions for NCC and mainline Protestant leaders who have backed the alliance," commented IRD vice-president Alan Wisdom.

No room for traditional Christian view

"Will they uphold the official teachings of their denominations? Will they defend millions of their own church members, whose sincere belief in those teachings has been impugned by the Interfaith Alliance? ... Which side are they on?" asked Wisdom.

He added, "Even though the Interfaith Alliance appeals for 'tolerance,' it turns out to be rather intolerant. The alliance dismisses some choices — those in obedience to a biblical command — as obviously 'false.' It rejects some beliefs — those based upon a teaching of the universal church — as too hateful even to be allowed a hearing.

"It implies that individuals have little moral freedom, that they are compelled to act out whatever behavior their orientation dictates, and that any hope of change is futile. I wonder if this sad message is really the gospel that our church leaders were called to proclaim."

15 sponsors

The ads were sponsored by 15 Christian organizations, including the American Family Association, Center for Reclaiming America, Christian Family Network, Christian Coalition, Concerned Women for America, Family Research Council, Coral Ridge Ministries, and Exodus International, a worldwide coalition of Christian ministries which offers support to homosexuals seeking to leave that lifestyle.

Bob Davies, North America director for Exodus, said the campaign was not motivated by hate. "This is an ad campaign for truth. Too often, the national media present homosexuality as inborn and unchangeable. Our lives are witness to the truth: homosexuality can be changed. That's not a theory; it's a daily reality in the lives of thousands of ex-gay men and women."

Davies said that ministries associated with Exodus have been contacted by over 200,000 people during the past 25 years. "There are thousands of people who are unhappy with being gay. We're here to offer support to those men and women who want to change."

Resolving conflict

Many of the people who contact Exodus are Christians who are "in conflict between their religious convictions and their homosexual feelings," Davies said. "We help them resolve that conflict by showing them a way out of homosexuality through the power of Jesus Christ."

One of the ads run by the Christian groups featured Green Bay Packers defensive great Reggie White in uniform. The NFL says the use of White's uniform violates league policy, but acknowledged that there was no communication with sponsors of the ads before they ran. League officials said they planned to contact the sponsors to explain the rules.

Imajenings

Body, mind, soul

Last week I let my body do the grocery shopping.

The job had to be done. My mind complained about the mundane folly of grocery shopping. Didn't want to come along. Said it needed a break.

So my body put on its shoes and coat and headed for the door, leaving my mind fluffing the pillows on the couch, plopping itself down for an hour of filling up with garbage on TV.

My soul glanced furtively between my body and my mind, obviously weighing the consequences involved with staying or leaving. My soul moved to the door, slipping out just ahead of my body, which was busy trying to untangle the coat string caught around the door knob.

The cart roamed the aisles as my body, bolder in my mind's absence, unloaded the shelves of foods that seldom make it to our house. Two boxes of Marshmallow Alphabits. Potato chips and pop, three chocolate bars, four cans of Zoodles. My body, mouth watering, headed for the donuts when my soul tugged hard on the back of my coat and my body stopped at the bread shelf.

My soul winced when my body hurriedly pulled off five loaves, all white, tossing them carelessly in the cart. At the check-out my body shrugged off the pressure of my soul's urging and added two glossy magazines to the pile.

Once home my body, feeling lumpish and chagrined, moved mechanically, heavily putting things on shelves while my mind railed on loudly about the lack of brain food, granola, whole wheat, vegetables — "good stuff" in the catch. My soul, meanwhile, slid the magazines deep under a pile of forgotten papers near the recycing box.

My body turned to make tea — a brew crafted to make peace, to steep in quiet, to work it all out.

Coming together

A few days later it was my body, fevered and aching, that lay on that green lumpy couch amid fluffed pillows watching garbage on TV. My anxious mind paced the room. My soul whispered a soothing hymn, pressing near my body for comfort, brushing it tenderly.

My body grimaced when a surge of pain racked it after a bad coughing fit. My mind stopped and hovered, frozen silent, listening for the sigh at the end of the pain. When it came my mind stomped again over the possibilities, turning through the store of its past and present knowledge, what the doctor said, what the doctor probably meant — trying for a solution that, despite its frustration, it could not find.

My mind lunged into the dismal grip of the unknown future where tubes, procedures, surgeries and coffins loomed.

My soul reached around, moving carefully so my resting body wouldn't jostle, and with an amazing strength it firmly grabbed my mind by the hope, yanking it back to the present — out of the hold of fear and worry. And then my mind snuggled warm next to my soul, quiet and listening.

And then, all together the three of them prayed. Which is the only way to face the future, really.

Jen Vanderbeek is a freelance writer and mother of five. With her pastor husband, Peter, she lives in Forest, Ont.

Arts/Media

CD Review

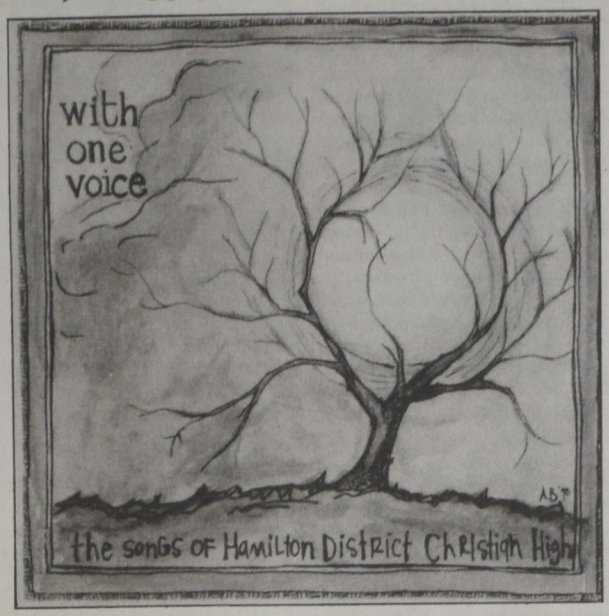
Christian high school students, staff join to produce musical CD

Marian Van Til

With One Voice

The Songs of Hamilton District Christian High

Produced by Christopher Clause. Engineered by Gary Honas. HDCH Records, 92 Glancaster Road, Ancaster, ON L9K 3K9.



This unusual recording features music-making by the students and staff of Hamilton District Christian High School in Hamilton, Ontario, and was produced by music teacher Christopher Clause.

The album contains an almost startling variety of styles and musical media. It starts off effectively with an a cappella (unaccompanied) female voice (Cheryl Veurink) singing "I Love You, Lord," followed by "Create in Me a Clean Heart" also sung a cappella, by two female voices in unison, then in two-part harmony (Jozina Dykstra, Julie McKnight).

Tracks 3 through 5 feature the HDCH Choir conducted by Dr. Christiaan Teeuwsen (music professor at nearby Redeemer College in Ancaster, Ont.), first in an arrangement of a Bach cantata movement for chorus and piano accompaniment, called here simply "Alleluia." The typically insistent, rhythmic Bachian accompaniment is very competently played.

Not the world's best — yet

The chorus sings convincingly and generally with precision, though with something of the pinched tone quality that is the bane of virtually all high school choirs and which is extremely difficult to overcome.

Samuel Sebastian Wesley's "Lead Me, Lord" continues the tracks for chorus and piano. Being in a slow, sustained style this piece would have been more effective with the organ accompaniment for which it was intended. The energetic singing of an arrangement of a Handel anthem "Sing Ye That Love the Lord," rounds out this section.

The prayer, "Father I Want You to Hold Me" by Brian Doerksen is quietly persuasive, sung in a sweet, clear voice by April Jordan, accompanied on acoustic guitar by Christopher Clause. This is followed by a well-known Chopin nocturne played dependably by Clement Ng.

Then follow selections by the HDCH Concert Band, conducted by Christopher Clause. They start with an arrangement by Claude T. Smith of the hymn "For the Beauty of the Earth," and then play a Moelemann arrangement of Bach's "Little" Prelude and Fugue in B-Flat Major (originally for organ).

This band is seemingly a fledgling organization which is still learning to play in tune, but the general rhythmic accuracy is laudable and the balance of instruments is surprisingly good, a plus for any beginning instrumental ensemble. Despite the pitch problems, the prelude and fugue comes off with enough enthusiasm and rhythmic vitality to drive home its toe-tapping Baroque beat.

The band also plays a setting of the Doxology (Old 100th) and a medley of works by film composer John Williams, arranged by John Moss ("John Williams Trilogy").

The doxology sounds ragged and not well-rehearsed, exacerbating the pitch problems and missing the precision in rhythm and in the entries of the various instrumental sections that were exhibited in the first two tracks. The trilogy has much the same problem and lacks conviction.

Then it's back to the piano, again nicely played by Clement Ng, this time in a Schubertian/Chopinesque setting of the classic hymn "Great is Thy Faithfulness."

Teachers in on the act

For something rather different, the HDCH teaching staff, accompanied by piano, acoustic guitar and drums, sings Graham Kendrick's gentle pop number, "The Servant King." There are obviously some excellent voices in this group (the female soloist is quite pleasing), but presumably (and understandably) for the most part these are untrained singers — the diction is not at all precise, and, in fact, one has to listen very carefully to catch the text.

For another change of pace, Teeuwsen's choir then sings, and sings well, two African folk songs, "Freedom is Coming" and "Siyahamba," a cappella, with hand drums.

From there, student Cheryl Veurink launches into a bluesy version of "Amazing Grace," accompanied effectively on acoustic guitar by the multi-talented, ubiquitous Christopher Clause.

Compelling song

Then comes a rock number, "Empty," the vocal style and some of the guitar work reminiscent of the early Beatles. The text is particularly touching, about a girl, Kara, whose dreams of love and fame have deserted her, and who yearns for "someone who will love her," "for this to be all over," for "someone who will hold her/She wants love."

Kara eventually finds that love by going back to "the Man she once knew,/that Someone who *will* love her/and let her start over."

Written in an understated manner by Justin De Waard, Kev Postma, Aaron VanBerkel, Derek Groen and Christopher Clause, this song is the most compelling of all the rock and pop numbers contained here.

"Here I Am" and "Eleven Years of Winter" are written and sung by Anna Bowen. Bowen has a slightly hard-edged voice that will be quite arresting when she has developed more confidence and control. The songs, in keeping with Bowen's voice, exhibit some of the hard edge of real life even while looking to Christ to "take this jaded heart" and guide the wanderer through that often tough reality — "resolution's on its way."

"Imagine (How God Can Sing)" by John Barlow Jarvic and Phill McHugh, is performed by Jessica MacKenzie, with piano accompaniment by Mark Chiang. The song pictures how we both grieve God and elicit his joy by our behavior.

A rhapsodic, improvisatory piano piece, cleverly named "Carpe Melodium" ("seize the melody") follows, well played by Laura Meester, which she and Sara Vanderwillik drew from an original work for concert band.

The CD ends with the title song which was written by Christopher Clause, in soft-rock style with some less gentle electric guitar thrown in. The song is performed by the combined students and staff of HDCH (the Acapella [sic] Chorus), accompanied by various guitars, piano, bass and drums.

After the last electric guitar chord fades away, the song ends anti-climactically with an a cappella stanza which in the first few measures very noticeably flattens in pitch and settles into the next lower key. The performance ends (a little strangely, perhaps) with applause and whistles from the performers.

Community builder

What stands out about this recording is its great variety and the obvious zeal with which virtually all of its tracks were laid down. The effort is to be highly commended, and the project must have constructively worked to build camaraderie and community and "one voice" within the school.

Such a recording will, of course, be of interest first of all, and perhaps only, to those involved, and their families, and to the school's immediate supporters. But what it sometimes lacks in finesse and fine performance it makes up for in verve and commitment, to the school, and much more importantly — and quite obviously — to Christ. Something to sing about.

No more R-rated films for him

SPARTANBURG, S.C. (EP) — A South Carolina theater owner says he will no longer show R-rated films. David Crenshaw said, "I'm worried that children are becoming desensitized to the violence that they see on the movie screens, especially with all the recent shootings at schools." Of 262 films reviewed by the Motion Picture Association of America this year, 164 earned an R-rating.

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Church

Unconventional new CRC flourishes in Mission, B.C.

Jacky Naayer

Mission, B.C. — The Christian Reformed church plant that started over a year ago in Mission, B.C., is growing fast. Mission Hills Community Church now has an average of 175 people attending Sunday morning services.

Rev. Andrew Turkstra has been there since the beginning. The outset of Mission Hills Community Church was different from any other Christian Reformed church plant. Pastor Turkstra and the Mission Hills "launch team" went door-to-door in one of Mission's neighborhoods and asked people questions regarding church in general. This survey helped the Mission Hills group to better understand the needs of the people.

The last question was: "Would you be interested in hearing more about this church?"

"We had 50 families in 200 that were interested," says Turkstra, "so we began to woo them. We sent them the results of the survey, what the church was going to look like — we sent them a Christmas card with a magnet and an invitation."

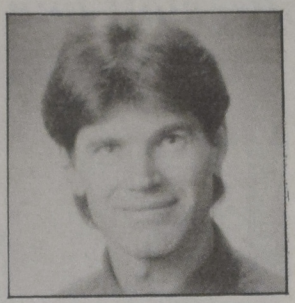
These last three items were all hand delivered to those who were surveyed. "For Trish [Turkstra's wife], and myself, out of 10 families who were interested, we had five families that came — and four of those are still coming."

With the information compiled from the surveys, Mission Hills Community Church created a mission statement and motto that set the direction for the church: "Mission Hills Community Church is gathering families on the journey of life to discover wholeness, happiness, and hope in Jesus Christ." And: "Real people who care about your reality."

Specific focus

"We have a very specific focus," says Turkstra. The church is targeting "the 'unchurched' crowd" of families with younger children between the ages of infancy to 15.

Besides its unique form of advertising, another strong point in the establishment of Mission Hills Community Church was their relationship with its "mother church," New Life Christian Reformed Church in Abbotsford. "The relationship we have as a mother-daughter church is one of the best I've ever seen in a church plant," asserts Turkstra.



Rev. Andrew Turkstra

To him, accountability is key, and he feels like that is where the strength lies in this relationship. He sets up monthly meetings with Rev. John Poortenga of New Life CRC, and also with Rev. Martin Contant, regional director of CRC Home Missions, Canada West.

New Life CRC and Mission Hills Community Church also set up combined services. One example of such a service was a "homecoming" for the Mission Hills Community Church. In such services, the relationship between the mother and daughter church is built on and strengthened.

Lives changed

The best example of growth in Mission Hills Community Church can be seen in its people. Turkstra has made many good friends in the church planting process. "One of my better friends right now [is someone] I never knew before [this church started]," says Turkstra.

"He and his wife were both not attending church. Over the past year, she started attending. Jesus just began to work in her life, began to help her refocus her priorities and find what she was looking for. Since then, she's become our treasurer. Then her husband started to come. He was afraid to come because he thought, 'All these guys are going to do is tell me that I'm bad.' That was his perception of church. But he started coming and he really enjoyed it. In fact, he enjoyed it so much he is now our head sound person."

Such occurrences are what makes it all worthwhile for Andrew Turkstra. And last year alone the church celebrated 14 baptisms.

Not everything is rosy, however. "It's hard to get the people to the point where they will commit to the church," Turkstra says. "For example, trying to get people to commit their time to a ministry is very difficult, especially during the summer. If it's nice out, they want to be able to leave at the drop of a hat. Commitments to ministries get in the way of this. You and I have been a part of a church for a long time so we understand that to commit to the church is all part of being a Christian. People who are brand new Christians — you can't want them to get to a place where you're at right now, that has taken you 10 years, when it's only been one year for them."

Shift to radical style

Turkstra also remembers times when his launch team members came into his office perplexed and uncertain because of the radical worship. "We were playing secular music and we played maybe one song that they could sing to. It was very presentational oriented, not so much participation oriented. I kept saying, 'Just give it six months.' Within six months we had so many people that had started to come, it changed their perspective."

The thing that keeps Turkstra going through the tough times is to remember that people's lives are turning around. He says, "[God] began showing me and everyone else who was a part of this ministry that, not only are those lives going to change, but our lives are going to change as well."

FROM COAST TO COAST

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Port Alberni-CJAV.....7:00pm 1240
Prince George-CIRX...7:00am 94.3
Princeton-CHOR.....8:00am 1400
Smithers-CFBV.....9:15am 1230
Summerland-CHOR.....8:00am 1450
Vernon-CJIB.....9:30pm 940

QUEBEC

Montreal - CIQC.....7:30am 600

ALBERTA

Brooks-CIBQ.....8:00am 1340
Ft. McMurray-CJOK....8:30am 1230
High River-CHRB.....6:30pm 1280
Edmonton - CKER....11:00pm 101.9
Westlock-CFOK.....7:30am 1370

SASKATCHEWAN

Estevan-CJSL.....8:00am 1280
Weyburn-CFSL.....8:00am 1190

MANITOBA

Altona-CFAM.....9:30am 950
Steinbach-CHSM.....9:30am 1250
Winnipeg-CKJS.....9:15am 810

ONTARIO

Atikokan-CFAK.....9:30am 1240
Chatham-CFCO.....6:30am 630
Fort Frances-CFOB.....9:30am 640
Guelph - CJOY.....8:30am 1460
Hamilton-CHAM.....7:30am 820
Kapuskasing-CKAP.....7:00am 580
Kingston-WLKC.....7:30am 100.7
Newmarket- CKDX.....9:30am 88.5
Oshawa-CKDO.....8:00am 1350
Owen Sound-CFOS.....10:30am 560
Pembroke-CHVR.....10:00am 96.7
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Stratford-CJCS.....8:45am 1240
Windsor-CKLW.....8:30am 580
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Middleton-CKAD.....8:30am 1350
New Glasgow-CKEC...7:30am 1320
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Study links faith with good health

RALEIGH, N.C. (EP) — A new study by Duke University shows that older people who have an active faith are less likely to suffer from high blood pressure.

Researchers studied 4,000 North Carolinians over age 65 and found that whose who participated in religious activities were 40 per cent less likely to have high blood pressure, which is a warning sign for heart disease.

Dr. Harold Koenig, co-author of the study, cautioned that the research did not prove a cause-effect relationship between religious activity and good health, but said it adds to the collection of studies which have found health benefits from faith. Other studies have found that people with an active faith are less likely to be depressed or addicted to harmful substances, and have healthier immune systems.

The new study, reported in the August issue of the *International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine*, found that after adjusting for differences in race, age, gender and other factors, there was still a significant difference in diastolic blood pressure readings for those who attended religious services at least once a week, read the Bible regularly and prayed regularly.

Researchers suggested that religious faith may serve as a source of comfort for older people, lowering stress in their lives.

Turkish state blocks election of Armenian patriarch

One candidate conspires with the state

Barbara G. Baker

ISTANBUL, (Compass) — Orders from the Istanbul governor's office have prevented Turkey's largest Christian community from electing its next spiritual leader in accordance with the church's constitution, in effect since 1863.

Since the late Armenian Patriarch Karekin II's death on March 10, the Turkish Cabinet has refused to approve an election calendar permitting the nations 55,000 Armenian Christians to elect his successor. It is normally a 15-day process. Democratic church elections for Istanbul's 84th Armenian Patriarch were scheduled in May, after the traditional 40 days of mourning.

But without explanation, an April 28 letter from the Istanbul governor's office ordered a halt in the church's plans until further notice. Osman Demir, one of 12 deputies to the governor, signed the order.

Can't let state dictate

Compass has learned that the Armenian community was informed orally that of the two candidates for the new Armenian patriarch, the Turkish state preferred the older man. Under church canons and Turkish law, only Archbishop Shahan Sivaciyan, 72, and Archbishop Mesrob Mutafyan, 42, qualify for the post.

"We deliberated and prayed as a church," a member of the community commented, "and we agreed that we cannot allow the state to dictate the choice of our next spiritual leader." Although Turkey requires separation of religion and the state under a strictly secular constitution, its Interior Ministry was accused of interfering in the last Armenian patriarchal elections in 1990.

Slander campaign

Meanwhile, a direct slander campaign in the rightist Turkish media had already begun to target Mutafyan, accusing him of anti-Turkish activities. When the *Turkiye* newspaper refused to retract its allegations, Mutafyan promptly filed and won a lawsuit for libel. The paper still refuses to obey court orders to print a retraction.

During May, the *Turkiye*-owned TGRT television station broadcast more allegations against Mutafyan, claiming that the government was very concerned about his candidacy for patriarch and preferred Archbishop Sivaciyan.

While the church waited for a resolution in the standoff, the patriarchate sent a routine application on June 5 to raise humanitarian aid through the church for Black Sea coast flood victims. It triggered four increasingly stern directives from Demir in late June.

Refusing to recognize the signature of Mutafyan as the "Locum Tenens" (official representative) of the patriarchate, Demir declared that under Turkish law the eldest and most senior cleric in line for patriarch must fill the interim post until a successor is elected.

Not over yet

In what the Turkish-language Armenian weekly *Agos* called a "constructive and informative meeting," Interior Minister Murat Basesgioglu met with Pilo Atan (chair of the church's electoral committee) and two others. Minister Basesgioglu blamed the unresolved crisis on "insufficient information and some wrong interpretations" and promised that the impasse would soon be straightened out.

Assuming the crisis was over, the Patriarchal Religious Council waited for over a month for written confirmation of Basesgioglu's assurances. Instead, on July 30, the church received a notarized warning from its own elderly candidate, Sivaciyan, backed by Demir, demanding that the office of Locum Tenens "be handed over to him immediately." Failure to comply, the elder cleric stated, "would not be in the best interests of Archbishop Mutafyan."

God or Caesar?

At an emergency general clerical assembly called for August 3, Mutafyan resigned his Locum Tenens position, while Sivaciyan again urged the assembly to bow to the state's wishes. In a subsequent secret ballot, Mutafyan was elected 23 to 3 as Acting Patriarch, giving him even stronger authority under church protocols to represent the patriarchate.

According to some Western sources, the Interior Ministry allegedly wants to gain more control over the selection process of the Armenian Patriarch. Turkey's Foreign Ministry, fearing it will create a bad public image for Turkey, reportedly opposes such a move. The local tourism industry is promoting a massive "Faith Tourism" campaign to attract Christian tourists to Turkey's biblical sites during the 2,000-year observance of the birth of Christ.

Resist!

Chapter & Verse

Wayne Brouwer
Andrew Kuyvenhoven
Laura Smit
Al Wolters

"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7)

A newly married couple moved into their first apartment. Marketing experts immediately targeted them, and salespeople for everything from laundry service to life insurance besieged them. While they were still busy unpacking a saleman representing a dairy came to the door. The young bride tried to turn him away. "My husband and I don't drink milk," she said.

"I'd be glad to deliver a quart every morning for cooking," he persisted.

"That's more than I need," she replied curtly, and began to close the door.

"Well, ma'am, how about some cream? Strawberries are just coming in at the market, and...."

"No!" she insisted. "We never use cream."

The man backed away slowly, and the woman congratulated herself on her sales resistance. The truth of the matter was that they had already ordered from another dairy, and she just wanted to get rid of the fellow.

The following morning, however, the same man appeared at the door with a bowl of plump, ripe strawberries in one hand and a half-pint bottle of cream in the other. "Lady," he said as he poured the cream over the berries and handed them to her, "I got to thinking — you sure have missed a lot!"

They had a laugh, she got the breakfast treat of her life, and he got a weekly order for milk!

Gravity and grace

Persistence often conquers resistance, especially when it carries a bowl of fresh strawberries in one hand. While often the pleasure gained is harmless, there are times when it is deadly. Following the path of least resistance is what makes people and rivers crooke, as one person has put it. "A bargain," said another, "is something you cannot use at a price you cannot resist." That is why Martin Luther cautioned his followers that there are three conversions necessary to gain eternal life: of the heart, the mind, and the wallet. "The last," said Luther, "is the most resistant."

We need to learn resistance in many ways in order to survive in life. When two Russian cosmonauts returned to earth in 1982 after 211 days in space they suffered from dizziness, high pulse rates and heart palpitations. They couldn't walk for a week. A month later they were still undergoing therapy for atrophied muscles and weakened hearts. In the zero gravity of outer space their muscles had begun to waste away. Scientists had to design "resistance suits" to counteract the unseen predator. Only with resistance applied against the muscles of the body could they remain strong.

Ben Weir, in his book *Hostage Bound, Hostage Free* (Westminster, 1987), translates this into spiritual terms. He documents the inner resistance that saved his life. During his many months of captivity in Beirut there was a constant nagging to give in to depression and give up to despair. Although his situation was excessive, beyond that which we normally face, it condensed into 18 months the wasting that can happen in any spirit over the years.

Charles Darwin, who grew up in a strong Presbyterian home, said, in his later years, that he never rejected the Christian faith; instead, he said, it gradually lost its importance to him as he ceased to use it. No resistance, no resurgence. No test, no tensile. No effort, no energy.

Growth

Someone told me recently of a young man who was buying his own clothes in preparation for college. He asked a sales clerk what the tag meant when it said "Shrink Resistant." The clerk replied, "Even though that shirt doesn't want to shrink, it will!"

Most of us could wear a label like that on our souls. Only the disciplines of faith will cause that label to fall off as our resistance to the devil grows.

Wayne Brouwer is senior pastor of Harderwyk Christian Reformed Church, Holland, Mich.

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Pastor couple would like to move mountain of debt

Bert Witvoet

So you're married and have children and feel called to the ministry, do you? It's going to take you a few years of financial belt tightening and hard work on the part of both you and your family. But then, once you have been called by a church, your financial troubles should be over, right? Especially when you're called by a Christian Reformed Church, which pays its pastors a decent salary by most standards. You need not worry unduly about meeting the weekly budget.

Peter and Jen VanderBeek have a hard time saying Amen to that. That's not because their congregation in Forest, Ont., is not paying their pastor a decent wage and is not standing behind the family in many other ways. It's because of a heavy debt load incurred while Pete was studying first at the King's University College in Edmonton, and then at Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) in Grand Rapids, Mich.

The end of the rope

Pete himself admits that he and Jen have been through an extremely stressful time lately because of "a tremendous debt load resulting from my training for the ministry." Their government student loans alone have mounted up to $60,000. Add to this another $28,000 they owe to banks, the Christian grade school, family and friends.

Pete and Jen have gone public with their situation, feeling that by doing so they prevent some of the shame implied with secrecy. "We feel we have done no serious wrong," says Jen, "and we know we are not the only recent graduates from CTS (certainly in the category of Canadians who were second-career students with families) in such a predicament, and quietly trying to work it out. It is high time people knew."

A credit counselor advised them to declare bankruptcy, and two bankruptcy trustees agreed with that conclusion. Both Pete and Jen were reluctant to go through with that option, "mostly based on pride and on a feeling of betraying the agreements that we had signed each time we applied and received the student loans," says Jen.

But because their family is at one of its most expensive times with five growing children in Christian schools, and their debt seems insurmountable, the VanderBeeks finally agreed to apply for bankruptcy. But on the day that the application was made, Parliament passed a law that makes it impossible to escape student loans by declaring bankruptcy for a period of 10 years after graduation.

Now they feel their backs are to the wall. One pastor advisor said to Pete: "So you will pay on your loans until you retire. Then what?" A haunting question, indeed.

Is this what their decision in 1987 has brought them?

Switch of lifestyle

Pete and Jen used to live in Vancouver where Pete worked for NorthWest Wholesale Florists, selling plants and flowers to shops and stores all over the Greater Vancouver area. Pete worked hard and drew a decent wage, enough to give his wife and three children a comfortable lifestyle. "We spent a good amount of money on vacations and entertainment, though we did not live extravagantly," says Jen. "We gave generously to the causes that we felt merited our support."

On his daily route, Pete ended up listening a lot to his customers and peer-counseling them. He was also growing in his role as deacon at New Westminster CRC. Because of this he began to think about working towards a degree in counseling and social work.

In May 1987, the family pulled up stakes and moved to Edmonton so Pete could study at The King's University College. Pete applied for and received B.C. student loans and Canada student loans up to $17,500 during the three years there. Two more children were born, the three older ones went to Christian school and Jen operated an in-home daycare full-time. Pete worked part-time as a night counselor/supervisor in a half-way house. He took on a few other seasonal jobs as well. The family also held a number of flyer delivery routes.

"In Edmonton, we lived very frugally," says Jen. "Bargain hunting at garage sales and second-hand stores became my hobby as much as a necessity for a growing family."

Resort to foodbanks

Encouraged by a successful three years of studies (he graduated with distinction in May 1990), Pete, with Jen's consent, decided to take the plunge toward ordained ministry. The couple had bought and sold houses in B.C. and Alberta without losing any money, and decided to do the same in Grand Rapids since there was no seminary housing available for their size family. They bought a house for $45,000 (US) — compare that to a $98,000 home in Vancouver and a $78,000 one in Edmonton.

But even though payments started immediately, they could not occupy their house for another 10 weeks. They had to spend a fair bit of money paying for motel rooms. Also the student loans from Canada could not go into effect until they had spent the $10,000 they had hoped to use as a down payment for their house.

In Grand Rapids they lived even more frugally than in Edmonton. They visited food banks and free clothing exchanges, and Jen soon knew where the second-hand stores were. Sending their children to the Christian school was a big item on their budget, something they could not really afford. When they left, the Christian school society graciously forgave their debt.

Pete graduated from Calvin Seminary in May 1995 with an MDiv degree. He served Forest, Ont., CRC as "stated supply" for a year, until he was called by them the following year. The VanderBeeks sold their house in Grand Rapids for the same amount they had paid for it, after having spent $2,000 on repairs. When all the fees were paid, they had $800 left of the original down payment and a student loan debt of $60,000.

Something must be done

The VanderBeek children attend Lambton Christian High School in Sarnia and John Knox Christian Elementary School in Wyoming for a total tuition expense of $12,000 per year. They were given tuition relief by the high school and helped a bit by the elementary school, which has no tuition relief system, and the deacons in Forest CRC and Wyoming CRC have also stepped in. Pete's parents and friends have also assisted throughout the years. Still the VanderBeeks owe John Knox $6,000 so far. And the future looks grim, if this pastor couple is going to continue sending their children to a Christian school, something they want to do and are also expected to do as spiritual leaders in their community.

"We are hanging in," writes Pete, "but sometimes we get very tired of the struggle and of crisis. We are not 'prosperity theologians' and we do believe in God's providence, but right now we want to scream for help from the rooftops."

One of those screams reached Peter Winters of Brantford, Ont. Winter has been talking to the VanderBeeks about contacting some Christian business persons to see if an aid package of sorts can be arranged.

Pete and Jen have also talked with Henry Eygenraam of Christian Stewardship Services to see if that organization can be of help to the VanderBeeks and to others in similar predicaments.

COURTESY PETE AND JEN VANDERBEEK

Pete and Jen VanderBeek and their family.

"We are hanging in," writes Pete, "but sometimes we get very tired of the struggle and of crisis. We are not 'prosperity theologians' and we do believe in God's providence, but right now we want to scream for help from the rooftops."

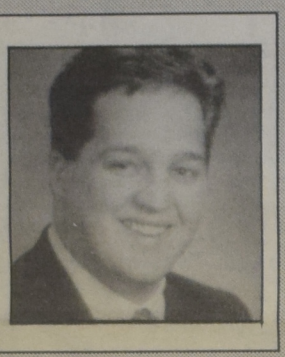
Count on 'normal' debt load, says recent sem grad

Bert Witvoet

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — Geoffrey Vandermolen graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary the same year as Pete VanderBeek and is now pastoring First Christian Reformed Church in London, Ont. He and his wife, Kristin, have no children so far and thus had an easier time than the VanderBeeks getting through seminary. Just the same, they are servicing a debt of $40,000, which, Geff estimates will take about 12 years to pay off.

But he does not consider that unusual. Anyone who studies for an MA degree has to expect that kind of debt today, he says. Nor does he want special treatment. "Since we believe in the Kingdom and that everyone is called to serve the Lord in all areas of life, we should not give seminary students special treatment," he says.

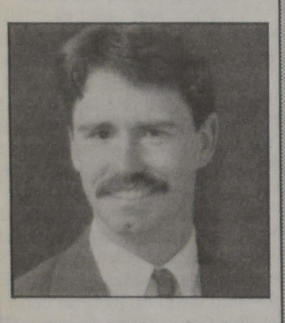
Exceptions may have to be made when the need is too great. But he would like to see a uniform system of support for seminary students at the classical level. He himself received about $2,000 a year from his classis, but a student from a neighboring classis was able to send home the bills for tuition, books and rent, and the classis paid them.



Geoffrey A. Vandermolen

A new phenomenon

Vandermolen points out that a seminary graduate often ends up in a small church which pays at the lower end of the recommended salary scale. This makes it more difficult for new pastors to pay off debt. A large debt may also pose a problem for smaller churches, he says, because they may find out that a candidate cannot afford to come to them.



Everett J. Vander Horst

The churches, in a way, are faced with a new phenomenon, says Vandermolen. In the past, a 21-year-old single man would enter seminary and find that he could make it through the system without much debt. Today many of the new pastors are second-career people in their 30s, often with families. The church hasn't yet caught up to that reality.

This situation is complicated by the high cost of Christian education. "There is a very clear expectation of CRC pastors and their families, especially in southern Ontario" that they send their children to Christian schools, says Vandermolen.

He suggests that after seven years of faithful service and faithful payments the churches apply the biblical model of Jubilee, in which a pastor would be released of all his debts.

Remove inequities

Everett Vander Horst, pastor at Telkwa Christian Reformed Church in B.C. is sympathetic to the VanderBeeks and others who live in southern Ontario where tuition costs are higher than in the Western provinces, where private schools receive government funds.

Everett and his wife, Christa, have one child now, but had none when he was in seminary a few years ago. Their financial situation is easier.

On top of that, Christa, an American, could work in the States while Everett studied. Just the same, they, too, ended up with a student loan of $40,000, which includes college loans for both of them. Vander Horst thinks that Canadian students are at a disadvantage today because of the low Canadian dollar and the skimpy government loans available to students studying abroad.

He saw the same inequities from classis to classis that Vandermolen sees, and he adds that women seminary students and male students not studying for an MDiv do not get equal treatment either from all classes.

Vander Horst would like to see the classical student aid funds being pooled at the denominational level so that the burden for each classis is equal. As it is, Classis Grand Rapids East, for example, supports more students, including students from elsewhere who take up residence in Grand Rapids for a few years, than many outlying classes. As a result the student aid is lower there per student.

A need to manage

While Everett is talking, his younger brother Ken in nearby Smithers is packing his family's belongings to move to Grand Rapids with wife, Margaret, and child. Ken, too, wants to become a pastor in the Christian Reformed Church. He does not anticipate a huge debt.

Both he and his wife have been working for five years, have $30,000 in RRSPs, a scholarship for $5,000 to look forward to, plus some assistance from Classis B.C. North-West. Ken hopes that the first two years at Calvin Seminary will be covered. He expects that it will cost their family $25,000 a year to live and study in Grand Rapids.

So Ken thinks they may end up with a debt of between $30,000 to $40,000, maybe less. Yes, the challenge daunts him, especially since he admits to being "a real administrator" who loves to manage things well. "But what choice do you have?" he adds.

He did ask that *Christian Courier* be sent to his new address in G.R. by August 1. That is as a good a sign as any of his faith in God.

Today many of the new pastors are second-career people in their 30s, often with families. The church hasn't caught up to that reality.

There are ways to avoid huge debt: sem president

Bert Witvoet

Grand Rapids, Mich. — According to Calvin Theological Seminary president James De Jong, "There is no reason for any North American seminary student at Calvin to occur $100,000 of debt while studying here" what with assistance and advice available from the seminary, and with the resources from classes, home congregations and sympathetic friends ... unless, the student carried a big debt with him when he began seminary.

De Jong explains that "the seminary is close to reaching visa arrangements that would allow Canadian students and spouses to work in the U.S. while studying at Calvin Seminary. Currently, a Canadian student is allowed to work for remuneration in local congregations while studying.

"That a very few choose not to while amassing unmanageable debt is regrettable," he says, "and ignores the explicit financial counsel they receive from the seminary's financial aid office."

Seminary graduates' opportunities for employment are excellent in the Christian Reformed Church. At the moment, reports David Engelhard, general secretary of the CRCNA, there are 33 churches in Canada alone which do not have a pastor.

God knows
(A true story)

Eddie R. Rhodes

Burt Sullivan speared the candy wrapper with a practised ease and fed it into the black plastic bag at his hip. It vexed him that the good Christian folk who frequented these hallowed cemetery grounds behaved like heathens. He'd have ordained an Eleventh Commandment: "Thou shalt not litter."

Yet he ought not to grumble; the few bucks that Father Reaney paid him to keep the place tidy, dig an occasional grave and trim the grass, took care of his booze. The disability pension covered the rest of his needs.

"How could anyone be so cruel to do that?"
"Do what?"
"Steal flowers from a dead man's gravestone."

He liked the dapper Irish priest with the snow-white hair and leprechaun face. The man wasn't preachy, and more in his favor, was fond of a wee dram himself, especially on a bleak morning. "Just to keep out the cold, you understand, Burt."

Sullivan tossed the bag and stick into the barrow, turned, and headed down the tree-lined, gravel-path towards the shed. Once inside his refuge he could put his feet up, snatch a quiet smoke and enjoy a welcome slug of Jack Daniels.

He quickened his pace, then suddenly noticed the woman. She was no stranger; he'd seen her often, tending the huge grave on the hillside. They shared a nodding acquaintanceship, which suited Burt just fine. He wasn't big on small talk.

Petite, and dark, the lady reminded him a little of his own mother, except that she was weeping. He'd never seen his ma do that — not ever. Even when the morphine could no longer deaden her pain. That was way back before 'Nam, when he still believed that prayer might help.

It hadn't!

He gripped the handles tighter, lowered his head and made to hustle by.

"One moment, young man," the woman called, dabbing her red-rimmed eyes. "Can you help me?"

Sullivan hesitated, looking around. Where was the sky-pilot when he was needed? No big deal, he'd always been taught to mind his manners. The sooner he sorted the old dear out, the quicker he'd be tackling his mid-day "fix" of bourbon. He parked the cart against the grass verge and stomped across the bench.

"What's your problem, Ma'am?" he asked.

She ignored his question, asking her own. "How could anyone be so cruel to do that?"

"Do what?"

"Steal flowers from a dead man's gravestone."

Sullivan curbed the "Get real!" that came to mind, watched the distraught figure fumble in her large crocodile purse for fresh tissues and drop the sodden ones to the ground. The tears didn't move him. He'd seen grown men cry for much more valid reasons.

Instead he merely shrugged. "It happens a lot around here," stooped, retrieved the discarded paper ball, and threw it into the barrow. "It's none of my business, Lady. I only get paid to pick up other people's trash."

"I paid nearly fifty dollars for that bouquet," the woman wailed, black eyes squinting at Sullivan, studying him.

He saw "The Look" surface. His faded blue-jeans, plaid shirt and brush-cut hair often sparked it. He remembered it well from his pan-handling days.

Old habits die hard. Obviously, the old crone had more money than sense. He pushed out a big, calloused hand. "I could go get you a fresh bunch from the store," he offered.

She didn't try to hide the sneer, her laugh bordered on hysteria. "You must think me mad. Give you any money and you'd be long gone."

Sullivan grinned, showing his yellow fangs. "Suit yourself," he said. Serve her right if someone came along and ripped all those rings off her scrawny, little fingers. He grabbed the work-cart and trundled away, leaving the whining shrew alone with her misery.

"NATIONAL FILM BOARD

He'd already lost ten minutes of his lunch-break and faced a busy afternoon. There were a couple of graves to be dug in the bottom end of the cemetery. These plots had been designated for the paupers of the community. They would never qualify for the manicured lawns and cultivated gardens that the main area boasted, but the occupants weren't likely to complain.

He stopped at the hut, searching his jeans for the key and saw a small figure kneeling by a recently filled-in grave. Curiosity overwhelmed his craving for a drink. This was his patch; he ought to find out what was going down.

The girl glanced up as he approached, her bright-blue eyes innocent, large and serious. Teased by the breeze, strands of straw-colored hair whipped at her pale cheeks. She had a stubborn set to her jaw and looked about six years old. She'd already planted half of the flowers in the rich, red-brown soil.

Sullivan knew the answer, but asked anyway. "Where did you get those?"

"Way up there on the hill." The tot waved a grubby hand.

"From the grey-marble stone with gold writing? That's stealing, kid."

"No, it's not," the child protested. "And I'm not a kid. I'm almost six-and-a-half. And my name's Kathy."

"Feisty too." Sullivan thrust out his fist and shook hands solemnly. "I'm Burt. Mind if I take a load off?" He eased down slowly onto the grass at the girl's couldn't-care-less shrug.

"You got a bad leg, Burt?" she asked, watching him settle.

"Not any more, this one doesn't need washing, just a quick polish once in a while." He chuckled and said, "Don't you try to change the subject now. What about these flowers you've stolen? You have to take them back."

"No, I don't. All flowers belong to God. He made them. He makes all things: mountains, rivers, birds, bees — everything. He even made you; and me."

"Who fed you that garbage?"

The child's bottom lip pouted. "My Momma told me. She says that we're all God's children."

"Yeah, right. And where's your Momma now?"

The tiny chin stiffened; the blue eyes shone with tears.

Kathy patted the soft ground. "Down here, but she's asleep right now," she said. "That's why I had to have these flowers."

Sullivan scratched his stubbled face. This tyke had lost him, but he had to know. "Okay, I'll buy it," he said.

The girl took a huge breath. "Well, when I've planted all these flowers, God will know that my Momma's ready to go to heaven. Then he will send down an angel to take her home."

This half-pint had all the answers. How could he argue against such logic? He felt hot, tired and sorely in need of that drink. But it could wait. He'd heard his Ma tell him a million times, "Son, even if you don't believe in the Good Lord he still believes in you."

Sullivan hitched his body closer to the grave. "Why don't I lend you a hand, sprout?" he suggested, boring deep holes into the cool, pungent earth with his long, bony fingers. "We'll have your momma on her way in no time at all."

Eddie Rhodes is a free-lance writer, an active member of Strathroy's Writers Club who is fine-tuning his first novel. He lives in Strathroy, Ont.

How does the Spirit work in 'times of transition'?

As promised in a note to a letter to the editor in our previous issue, we are encouraging a discussion of what Dr. Henk Hart of the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto meant when he said at a Bolton conference this year that the Bible does not provide us with "timeless" principles, but that we should work with the principles the Spirit gives us. This is a startling statement that caught the editor's attention and also made at least one of our readers wonder what Hart meant. In the following opinion piece, Hart elaborates on what he said. We have invited Dr. Al Wolters of Redeemer College to respond to Hart's article in the next issue. We anticipate a lively and friendly discussion. **Editor**

Henk Hart

Christian Courier's coverage (July 3) of the Reformed Organizations in Transformation conference in Bolton, Ont., indicates that I also attended that wonderful Spirit-led and Spirit-filled conference. I, like many others, shed tears and experienced an amazing openness. We listened to each other as voices of God's Spirit moving us onward, ready for change, and firm in respect for our differences.

Change in principle is common in the Bible, because it tells the story of Israel and the Church moving through time.

As Bert Witvoet wrote: "There was a lot of talk about letting the Spirit lead us into the future." The way he saw it, "The Reformed worldview we present is a clay jar meant to be broken at some time" and noted, "the term 'Reformed' seemed up for grabs at the conference."

And so it did seem. Spokespersons for Christian colleges and others, for example, saw little benefit in using the word "Reformed" to promote their work. Bert wrote: "Many of the leaders of the Reformed community ... read the times and know that old formulas don't work forever."

That sounds like a line he quoted from me: "The Bible does not present us with timeless principles." He added that I also said we should "work today with the principles the Spirit gives us."

Indeed, the day I read Bert's reports I enjoyed a quote about the importance of principles from my own work of 20 years ago in the Spring 1998 issue of *Trinity Christian College Magazine*. I said: "Conversion in Jesus Christ is in principle total, radical and integral;... nothing ... can be left outside the scope of allegiance to Jesus as Lord of creation." I stand behind that quote today, totally, radically and integrally.

No timeless principles

Why is Bert Wivoet's formulation (old formulas don't work forever) easier to accept than mine (the Bible does not present us with timeless principles)?

Possibly because he did not refer to the Bible but to Reformed views, and because "timeless principles" is a dearly beloved expression to many, whereas he just referred to "old formulas" and said they "don't work forever." But my language is actually close to the Bible's own. Let me explain.

A timeless principle would be a principle unaffected by time. Whatever might happen to people who obey this principle as their journey progresses, nothing could in any way affect the principle. That would be a timeless principle. Dutch philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd said 70 years ago that such principles were not biblical but pagan, because a real principle is a beginning (the Latin *principium* means "beginning"), so *as a beginning it is in time. Beginnings unrelated to time,* said Dooyeweerd, were invented by Greek philosophers who were pagan thinkers.

No fear in love

Was he right? Let's take the principle "Love God above all and your neighbor as yourself." That summary of the law was formulated by Jesus at a specific time and quoted from a law that itself had a beginning. His formulation deeply affected an earlier principle which, like his, summarized our entire relation to God, namely Ecclesiastes' "Fear God and keep his commandments...." The change is so important that 1 John 4 specifically refers to it: "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear."

Most of John's letter can be read as a commentary on this change in a biblical principle between Ecclesiastes and Jesus.

Change in principle is common in the Bible, because it tells the story of Israel and the Church moving through time. The most basic things change. God moves along with Israel. He has a mobile dwelling, a tent. When Israel wants a temple, God first protests, then gives in. But only for a time. Later God, in Christ, speaks of breaking that temple down and living again in people who are historical creatures, whose stories tell of how they move in time.

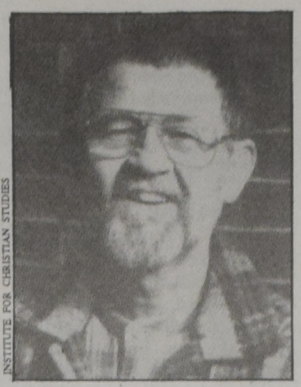
In Deuteronomy 23 God forbids strangers and eunuchs to enter the temple. Isaiah 56 says this needs to change.

Primacy of Spirit

Acts 8 tells us that the Spirit commanded Phillip to baptize a eunuch/ stranger. So the Bible reveals God's principles, but God apparently does not give them for all times. God's Spirit still provides them today when the biblical ones need reformation.

Peter found that out, as Acts 10 tells us. The Spirit told him to forget about all the unclean animals God had told Jews not to touch, as well as about entering a home that God had forbidden Jews to enter.

Paul stresses this primacy of the Spirit over and over again in the Bible. After the Bolton conference I heard a Christian Reformed sermon on Galatians 5, the classical text for Paul's teaching on this matter: for freedom Christ has set us free. The pastor had struggled with it, because though it seemed straightforward, Calvinists don't see it Paul's way — though Lutherans do — and this pastor wanted to be a Calvinist.



INSTITUTE FOR CHRISTIAN STUDIES

Dr. Henk Hart

That sermon was an event like the Bolton conference. I cried again. This young, vulnerable pastor who takes orthodoxy seriously, implored us to hear this text: we don't get our guidance from the way God put it in the law, but from how God leads us in the Spirit. Using the Bible, the Spirit shows us in our own time how to embody the presence of a God who always loves us.

Second Corinthians 3 is another of Paul's classic texts for our concern. Paul says, "Our sufficiency is from God, who has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life." When we heed this, says Paul, we "are being changed...."

The Spirit sets free

That written code is God's law. In Ephesians Paul writes about this law that Christ abolished it in his flesh. What comes in its place is that in the "Spirit we have access" to God. The theme echoes Galatians. There it is: "For freedom Christ has set us free." In Corinthians it is: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."

When the guidance of the Spirit cannot be affected by the times in which we live, the New Testament speaks of such adherence without change as a yoke (of slavery) in Galatians, in Acts and in the Gospels. That's why Jeremiah (7:22-23) already spoke of commandments as really never having been given by God except for their effect through all time, namely to forge a relationship between God and people in which people listen to God and so become God's people.

But God the Spirit is prepared

See **THE SPIRIT** *page 14...*

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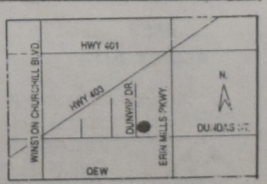

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The Spirit in 'times of transition'

... continued from page 13

to speak differently in different times. So when Paul in 1 Corinthians 7 gives guidance not directly commanded by God, he, knowing of his (and our) access to the Spirit, said, "And I think that I have the Spirit of God."

Of course we will always need the Bible as the book in which God gives us inspired evidence of the Spirit guiding people in their times. In Joshua, in a climate of ethnic cleansing, God told people to wipe out their neighbors.

In the Gospels, when people knew Isaiah, Jesus told people to love their neighbor by dying for him or her, and to love their enemies. Jesus made this all very clear in the Gospel of John: the Spirit will lead us into the truth.

So when there was concern at the conference whether all that reformation and change was biblical, I said what Bert Witvoet heard many leaders support: old formulas don't work forever. But I said it with reference to the Bible and the Spirit, because I read the Bible and hear the Spirit as affirming what Reformed leaders were saying at Bolton.

No help for Spirit-living

Do we need the Bible today? Of course. It is an inspired segment of the story of God and God's people, written "for our instruction, that by [our] steadfastness and by the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

They show us how the Spirit worked between Abraham and the early church, so that we, who have access to that Spirit, may trust that Spirit's guidance in our time. The expression "timeless principle" does not give us the help we need to live by the Spirit.

Rev. Louis Tamminga (emeritus pastor and head of CRC Pastor-Church Relations) hoped, in his closing speech, that after I had recommended what I here explained, people would still be encouraged at all times to read the Bible.

Keep reading

So do I. People should read the Bible ceaselessly to become familiar with the Spirit, who will otherwise not be recognizable in our time. For the Spirit is none other than the Spirit who inspired what is written. Tamminga illustrated this by saying that we would always be able to comfort a dying believer who fears that moment of death with Romans 8:1: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." That was a great and moving moment at the conference.

Another moment was more private. A representative of AWARE [As We Are, a support group for gay CRC members] who is in Christ Jesus talked, just before we went to hear Tamminga's closing remarks, with someone else who is in Christ Jesus. They went back in sadly. One had appealed to a timeless biblical principle that made the other feel condemned.

But Paul's text comforted and transformed them into newness of life, the newness of accepting and of being accepted. They embraced one another. Tamminga, to whom I told this, was confirmed in his reading and surprised by theirs. He discovered that times, places, and audiences do, in the Spirit, affect our Scripture readings. So I suggest we discuss this important matter for a bit in CC.

Dr. Hendrik Hart is senior member in philosophy at the Institute for Christian Studies (ICS), Toronto.

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When stones sweat in the afternoon, expect rain

Farm fodder

Maynard Vander Galien

When I was a teenager in the late 1960s I worked for a construction company. The owner of the company would shake his head vigorously in disbelief whenever his employees talked about the weather and mentioned old weather lore.

We would be taking a coffee break or eating lunch and if the boss happened to stop by, one of us outdoors/farm lads would often come up with a weather forecast. Some of the older employees were very good at forecasting the weather. But no one could convince our boss that there is some truth to these old weather sayings.

Trouble was, our boss was an indoors type who loved to curl and that kind of thing. He did not hunt or fish, nor did he enjoy nature as many of his employees did.

"We're going to get rain soon because the crickets were chirping in the summer kitchen."

There are so many signs in nature that indicate weather changes. A ring around the sun or moon means moisture in the air.

"The horses' tails were larger (hair standing erect)."

"There was a ring around the moon last night."

"The cat was sneezing...."

"The sheep were leaping and frisking about."

Some of the employees talked about the moon. A new moon would bring a change in the weather.

I could always tell when rain was coming when the front barn door blew shut when we were milking and we had to put something by the door to keep it open. It meant there was a change of wind. Wind from the north and south is a dry wind, bringing no rain with it. And east or west wind is usually a sign of rain coming.

"There's rain coming," I'd say, "the barn door blew shut this morning when we were milking."

It was always fun discussing the weather when our boss was around. I can still see his face and him asking us, "How can you guys believe that kind of stuff?"

Based on signs in nature

Maybe you are also skeptical about weather lore. We have had many hot, windy days this summer, times when the wind blew in from the west and it didn't rain. As I write this column on a Saturday evening there is a nice breeze from the west. I hope it rains. Pastures are starting to burn up. New seedlings need more moisture. There was no ring around the moon, but radio weather forecasters are calling for rain.

There are so many signs in nature that indicate weather changes. A ring around the sun or moon means moisture in the air. A red sky in the morning is a very good sign of rain to come. A red sky in the evening means nice weather ahead. (As indicated in the old saying: "Red sky in the morning, sailors' warning; red sky in the night, sailors' delight.")

I am always observing the sky. First thing when I get up I stare out a few windows to see what the sky looks like (if it's not too dark yet). I check the sky as I head to the barn before 6 a.m. And before going to bed I take note of the sky again. Watching the sky makes a lot of sense when there's hay to cut and bale.

Strange but true?

* If it rains before church on Sunday it will rain all week long.
* When cattle stand with their back to the wind, rain is coming.
* If a cow hollers in the morning, expect rain by night.
* Before a storm, sheep will frisk, leap and butt each other.
* "Swallows fly high, clear blue sky; swallows fly low, rain we shall know."
* It never storms when the moon is nearly full.
* When stones sweat in the afternoon, expect rain.
* Ropes are more difficult to untwist before bad weather.
* "Ants that move their eggs and climb, rain is coming anytime."
* Spiders strengthening their webs indicates rain.
* When storm is coming, cattle will go under trees if it's to be a shower, but will continue to graze if it will be a long rain.
* You can expect rain when cats wash behind their ears or when dogs' tails straighten.
* When the sun shines during a rain there will be rain tomorrow.
* You can expect rain when cattle lie down on going to pasture.
* "When dew is on the grass, rain will never come to pass."
* Two full moons in a calendar month will bring heavy rain and floods.
* "Wind north and south, the sign of drought; east and west, the sign of a blast."
* "If the cock crows going to bed, he will certainly rise with a watery head."

And this one which I learned when I was a youngster and have never forgotten: "Rain before 7, quits before 11; Rain after 9, no sunshine."

(Some of these sayings came from the *Old Farmer's Almanac Book of Weather Lore.*).

Maynard Vander Galien is an early riser. He has never slept in past 6:30 and he usually is up by 5:30 at his farm in the Ottawa Valley near Ottawa, Ont.

Advice

'Unwed pregnancy is not a sin'?

Peter and Marja are IN

Dear P & M:

Thanks so much for your July 24 column in which you shared your experience of becoming grandparents. God be praised when family members can help and love each other especially when the situation is not ideal. My fiance and I became pregnant before our scheduled wedding date.

At the time, we were punished by our church council with judgmental and harsh visits and with threats of mentioning our names from the pulpit. How humiliating that would have been! During the same time period the congregation avoided us and shunned us. Our families, on the other hand, were supportive and welcoming. Thank the Lord!

While I appreciated your insights, I just say that I did disagree with your statement that "getting pregnant outside of wedlock is a sin." I will agree that thoughtless secular behavior before marriage is sinful, but becoming pregnant is a matter of nature. It is a completely natural result of intercourse, nothing more, and even our wrongful actions and thoughts cannot make it sinful.

I wonder how many unhappily pregnant women consider abortion to escape our society's and church's views of unwed mothers. I, for one, remember being made to feel that being pregnant was a sin throughout the months of my pregnancy. And what an obvious sin; everyone knows because they can see it, whereas so many other sins can so easily be hidden.

Since then, many people have told me that we were among the few who "got caught." I take this to mean that many other couples, engaged or otherwise, are sexually active before marriage. Yet the unwed pregnant couple is solely punished.

Ironically, in the next issue of **Christian Courier** *(July 31), columnist Adrian Peetoom endorses living together before marriage. I cannot reconcile these opposing viewpoints. Is it wrong for a deeply committed unmarried couple to have sex? My head and my heart tell me two different things. I do understand, however, that unmarried couples who are sexually active take a huge risk in either breaking up what has been intimately joined (resulting in pain and brokenness), or making a baby, for which there is not a home ready and waiting (possibly resulting in even more pain and brokenness among three people). God probably gave us the Seventh Commandment to help us wisely avoid both of these scenarios.*

Dear Divided Heart:

Carefully re-read the sentence that prompted you to write. You will see that we did not say that *pregnancy* outside wedlock is a sin. What we did say is that *getting pregnant* outside of marriage is a sin. In other words, we are focussing on the act of sexual intercourse, not the child now growing in the womb.

We don't think that premarital sex is a worse sin than other sins, because the Scriptures do not rank sins (though sexual sin has peculiar and deep repercussions that other sins don't have because "all other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body," 1 Cor. 6:18). We also don't think that premarital sex is a more visible sin as far as God is concerned, because he knows and sees everything.

For these reasons we agree with Nathaniel Hawthorne's classic rebuke of the Puritans, *The Scarlet Letter,* in which he admonished the church for how it dealt with unwed pregnancy. We hurt with you about the treatment you received from the very community which should have supported you in your time of need. Such treatment in and of itself is a sin for its lack of love and forgiveness.

Premarital sex is generally less a sin of lust than it is a lack of self-control. And lack of self-control is always a sin, whether we are talking about losing our temper, engaging in gossip, getting drunk, telling a lie or going too far sexually. That's why we should be very careful about throwing the first stone. People who are aware of their own sins and who have experienced God's forgiveness will be more compassionate and forgiving in their treatment of others.

Finally, we stand by our statement that premarital sex, which is what we really meant by our phrase "getting pregnant outside of wedlock," is sin. In fact, we advise couples who "didn't get caught" to seek God's and each other's forgiveness.

How can sexual intercourse between two deeply committed, unmarried persons who are in love still be sin? Simple. The love may be there. A certain depth of commitment may even be there.

But unmarried sex falls short of the legal, social and religious commitments that provide the kind of secure environment which allow couples to thrive and children to bloom. And anything that "falls short of the glory of God" is sin, by the Bible's own definition (Romans 3:23).

That's why we oppose couples living together outside the bonds of marriage. Our advice has always been: Don't go all the way until you're in it all the way. To be "in it all the way" we need the blessing of the church, the binding of the state, and the support of family and friends.

Write to: P & M, 16 Kimbermount Drive, St. Catharines, ON L2N 5V6.

Peter and Marja Slofstra are a pastor and wife team living in St. Catharines, Ont. They are assisted by an advisory panel consisting of Herman de Jong, Bill Lidkea, Alan Vandermaas, Marian Van Til and Bert Witvoet.

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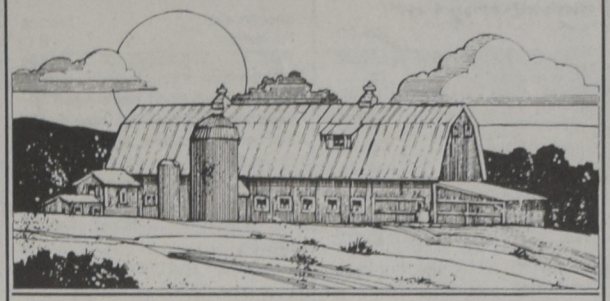

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Birthdays	$40.00

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Note: All rates shown above are GST inclusive

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a) *Christian Courier* reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format.,

b) A sheet with information about an obituary sent by funeral homes is *not* acceptable since it leads to errors and confusion.

c) Photographs sent by fax *are not* acceptable. If you wish a photo included, send us the original.

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Miscellaneous

Attention:

If you are considering sending us an ad via fax, please be sure to:
* send printed or typed copy
* include billing address
* include contact person with phonenumber.

Thank you.

Anniversaries

Sassenheim Terrace
the Neth. B.C.
1948 September 10 1998

"Let the light of your face shine upon us, Oh Lord. You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound!" (Ps. 4:6b-7).

It is with thankfulness in our hearts to the God of all grace that we announce the 50th wedding anniversary of

CASEY and PINA BRAAM
(nee VANDERKWAAK)

It is the prayer of all of us, that the Lord will continue to bless and keep you.

From your children and grandchildren:

Marianne & Brian Kormendy — Terrace, B.C.
Brian (deceased), Derek, Tanya
Ralph & Paulette Braam — Terrace, B.C.
Amanda, Kevin, Tim
Janette & Henry Seinen — St. Albert, Alta.
Matthew Seinen & Lisa Bleich, Andrew, Josh, Adrienne
Yvonne & Bill Warcup — Terrace, B.C.
Joanna, John
John Braam
Harold & Maria Braam — Terrace, B.C.
Jodi, Laura, Casey
Phyllis & David D. Hull — Terrace, B.C.
Gordon & Tracy Braam — Kelowna, B.C.

Congratulations to Casey and Pina Braam on their 50th wedding anniversary!

Thank You

PENNINGS:

A heartfelt thank you to all who shared in our happiness on the occasion of our 40th wedding anniversary. A special thank you to our children and grandchildren who did so much to make this an unforgettable day. Above all we thank our heavenly Father for His love and goodness.

Bert and Thea Pennings
90 Gardenville Rd., R.R. 3
Carrying Place, ON K0K 1L0

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Call (905) 934-5492

Office Assistant/Data Processing employment sought. Proficient in Microsoft Office 97, WordPerfect, Data Entry. Dependable, hardworking and organized. Contact Freda Van Arragon at **(905) 935-5049.**

Anniversaries

Thunder Bay, Ont.
1953 September 6 1998

"As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds His people both now and forevermore" (Ps. 125:2).

With gratitude to God for His faithfulness and mercy, we wish to announce the 45th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents

PIEBE and ELIZABETH ZANDSTRA
(nee YPMA)

Katherine Zandstra — Thunder Bay, Ont.
Freda & Harold Zylstra — Oak Bank, Man.
Kara, Lindsay, Meagan, Warren, Brett
Wendy & Harry Pranger — Thunder Bay, Ont.
Lisa, Julie, Nicole
Walter & Nynke Zandstra — Etobicoke, Ont.
Philip, Anna, Thomas

Home address: R.R. #2, Thunder Bay, ON P7C 4V1

Obituaries

Winsum Brampton
Fr., the Neth. Ont.
Oct. 27, 1907 - Aug. 7, 1998

JELTJE JAPKE VANDERVEEN

went to be with the Lord on Friday, Aug. 7, 1998.

Predeceased by her sister Rinkje VanderVeen (April 1996) and her brother Cornelis VanderVeen (Sept. 1997).

Sister-in-law of Albertje VanderVeen, Brampton, Ont.

Aunt of:

Karl & Nan VanderVeen — Woodbridge, Ont.
Andy & Alice VanderVeen — London, Ont.
Jim & Iems VanderVeen — Loretto, Ont.
Jace VanderVeen — Haarlem, the Neth.
Chris & Ann VanderVeen — Brantford, Ont.
Rinske & Hans VanBrederode — Barrie, Ont.
Jill VanderVeen — Toronto, Ont.
Rinke & Sonya VanderVeen — St. Catharines, Ont.

"The Lord is my light and my salvation" (Ps.27:1).

A memorial service was held at Heritage Hall, Holland Chr. Homes, in Brampton, Ont.

Correspondence address: Chris & Ann VanderVeen, 137 Blossom Ave., Brantford, ON N3T 5L9

Anniversaries

Woudsend Fenwick
Fr., the Neth. Ont.
1948 September 3 1998

On Thursday, Sept. 3, 1998, the Lord willing, our parents

JELLE and ANNA DEVRIES

hope to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. We thank God for all these years given to them and pray that He will bless Mom and Dad and continue to keep them in His care.

Raymond & Lonny DeVries — Wellandport, Ont.
Brenda & Steve (Tyler), James & Amanda (Shalyn), Matthew, Raymond
Epp & Diana DeVries — Fenwick, Ont.
Andrew, Jack, Alicia, Rachel
Ann & Bill VanLochem — Fenwick, Ont.
Steve, Greg, Richard, Ryan
Jessie & Ben Bruining — Port Dover, Ont.
Julie & Roger, Jeremy, Amy, Rebecca, Leanne
Vicky & Jim Stienstra — Vineland, Ont.
Kevin, Nathan, Kristin
Harry & Nancy DeVries — Grimsby, Ont.
Stephanie, David, Calvin, Kurtis
Leo & Margaret DeVries — Fenwick, Ont.
Daniel, Jessica, Joshua, Mark, Andrea
John & Joanne DeVries — Smithville, Ont.

Home address: Box 277, 741 Welland Rd., Fenwick, ON L0S 1C0

Obituaries

CATHERINE (TRIJNTJE) VAN NIEJENHUIS

Dec. 26, 1946 - July 1998
Psalm 91:1

After a three-month struggle with cancer, our daughter, sister and friend travelled to her heavenly destination at the age of 51.

A psychiatric nurse by profession, she travelled and worked all over the world, settling in Perth, Western Australia in 1985. She lived five minutes from Mullaloo Beach on the Indian Ocean, worked in the Graylands Hospital, sang alto in the Perth Oratorio Choir, attended the Reformed Church of Perth and enjoyed a competitive game of SCRABBLE.

Predeceased last year by her father, Jan.

She is survived by her mother, Anje, by five brothers and sisters: Bert (Erna), Herm (Dee), Geri (Norm), Cec (Karen), and Monica (Ron), and by 16 nephews and nieces.

Correspondence addresses:
Anje Van Niejenhuis,
#214 13425 - 57 St., Edmonton, AB T5A 2G1,
Geri Mantel, 4321 - Birch Ave., Terrace, BC V8G 1X2

Classifieds

Obituaries

Bodegraven Samia
the Neth. Ont.
May 6, 1928 - Aug. 4, 1998

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Rom.8:28).

Taken home to be with his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

JOHN (JAN) HAVEMAN

will always be lovingly remembered by his wife Susan Haveman (Hokke),and his children:
Carla Bergin — Samia, Ont.
Ron & Joyce Haveman — Sombra, Ont.
Elizabeth & Kasey Vanderveen — Holland, Mich.
John & Connie Haveman — Kakabeka Falls, Ont.
David & Melinda Haveman — Murille, Ont.
Dear Opa to 24 grandchildren.
Also remembered by four brothers and four sisters, Hilda Pranger and husband Jan of Guelph, Ont., Geert Haveman and wife Joyce of Beamsville, Ont., Hennie Haveman of Mt. Hope, Ont., Jaap Haveman and wife Nel, Piet Haveman and wife Wil, Jeanette Paardekoper and husband Jan, Janny Scholts and Bien ter Meer and husband Hennie, all of the Netherlands as well as many nephews and nieces.
Predeceased by his parents Klaas Haveman (1967) and Jantje Haveman (Pranger-1977) and a sister Tryntje Niemeyer (1998) of the Netherlands.
Funeral service was held at the Second Chr. Ref. Church on Exmouth St., Sarnia, Ont., on Aug. 7, 1998, at 1 p.m., Rev. Ken Benjamins of Wyoming, Ont., officiating.
Correspondence address:
1230 Pretty Rd., Sombra, ON
N0P 2H0

Haulerwijk Smithers
Fr., the Neth. B.C.
Sept. 7, 1911 - Aug. 4, 1998

Peacefully, the Lord took home his child

ALLEN VENEMA

Dear husband of Jessie Venema, - Baron
Dear father and Pake of:
Henry & Marianne — Cobden, Ont.
Marc, Deane
John Venema — Vancouver, B.C.
Robert & Anne — Nanaimo, B.C.
Dwayne, Dennis
The funeral service was held in Smithers, Rev. Klazinga officiated.
Correspondence address:
Jessie Venema, Box 4665, Smithers BC V0J 2N0

Interested in placing an ad?
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Job Opportunities

Residential construction company requires **two team players to assist in the framing of new homes.** Those with experience are preferred but anyone with the ability to work hard and learn quickly in a team environment will be considered. Please contact: **Mark at (519) 821-3497 or fax resume to (519) 821-1297.**

I would like an **energetic person to work in meat processing plant** in the Cambridge area. Must be able to do lifting e.g. to work in shipping and packaging department, along with other duties.
Call (519) 621-6829

Miscellaneous

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Teachers

OAKVILLE, Ont.: Oakville Chr. School requires a **Grade 8 teacher** for Sept. 1998. Teaching experience in Language Arts and Drama is preferred. Please send a letter of application and resume to:
The Principal
Oakville Christian School
112 Third Line
Oakville, ON L6L 3Z6

Anniversaries

1958 September 4 1998

We are excited to let you know about our parents' and grandparents' 40th wedding anniversary.
The years reflect God's awesome faithfulness!

JOHN and MARY LOUWS
(DEKOK)

We love you both dearly, from:
Andy Louws — Strathroy, Ont.
Cindy & Peter Tuininga — Exeter, Ont.
Josh, Krista, Tabitha, Faith
Frank & Helen Louws — Raleigh, N.C.
Stephen, Erica, Mitchell
Joanne & Ken Jaarsma — Houston, B.C.
Justin, Benjamin, Kendra, Caleb
Nancy & Henry Mostert — Hamilton, Ont.
Cheryl, Brian, Jessica, Hannah, Bethany
Address: Box 52, Talbotville, ON N0L 2K0

Teachers

WASAGA BEACH, Ont.: Due to increased enrolment **Silvercrest Chr. School** is inviting applications from primary and intermediate teachers for **a possible half-time opening beginning Sept. 1, 1998.**
Preference will be given to applicants able to teach French and music. The successful applicant will agree with the constitution and by-laws of Silvercrest Chr. School.
Please forward your resumes to:
Silvercrest Chr. School
380 Zoo Park Rd.
Wasaga Beach, ON L0L 2P0
Fax: (705) 429-4303
e-mail: scs@georgian.net

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Job Opportunities

First Chr. Ref. Church of Barrie, Ont., is pleased to invite applications for the following positions:

Music Director

This part-time position (approx. 15 hours per week) requires a motivated, competent musician who can organize and provide leadership through music in worship. The ideal candidate will demonstrate a clear understanding and commitment to the Reformed view of worship, its rich heritage in music, and be able to incorporate the best of current musical offerings into services meaningfully.

Youth Director

This part-time position (approx. 25 hours per week) requires a person who has a clear sense of calling to minister to youth. The ideal candidate will be involved in church education, pastoral care for young people, program development and implementation , and the administration of the church where it relates to youth and youth programs.

* Both the Music Director and Youth Director will be encouraged to seek continued training to maintain and increase confidence and effectiveness.
* These positions will be considered separately or in combination.
* An information package including complete job descriptions is available upon request.
* Application deadline is **October 15, 1998.**

Please forward resumes and/or inquiries to:
First Christian Reformed Church
Box 875, Barrie, ON L4M 4Y6
Attention: Caron Goodreau
(705) 734-9166 office/(705) 734-3785 fax

While all resumes will be carefully reviewed, only potential candidates will be contacted for an interview.

The **Board of Seaway Ministry of Classes Eastern Canada and Quinte** invites applicants for a

CHAPLAIN TO SEAFARERS

position in **Montreal harbor.** Must have a heart for evangelism and gifts in cross-cultural ministry. Facility with languages a plus. Responsibilities include presenting the gospel to seafarers, through visiting ships, engaging in spiritual conversation at the Centre, leading in public worship and devotions, and promoting the ministry among the churches. Chaplain must work well with staff and volunteers. Ordination and ministry experience are assets. **Contact Rev. Charles Kooger, P.O. Box 520, Frankford, ON K0K 2C0, (613) 398-7681 or ckooger@reach.net by Aug. 31, 1998.**

Miscellaneous

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(616) 245-9911, (616) 531-4046/res.

Classifieds

Events	Events	Miscellaneous

College and University Students

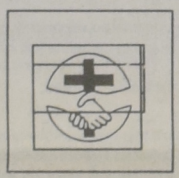
Join us when you are in Guelph, Ont.

New Life Chr. Ref. Church
invites you to their worship service and a welcoming lunch afterwards on **Sept. 13, 1998, 10:30 a.m.,** 400 Victoria Rd. N., Guelph, Ont.

Immanuel Christian Fellowship
Join us in our weekly meetings at 5:30 p.m., in University Centre room 332 starting Sept. 16.

Huron Campus Ministry
offers excellent programs on campus.
Contact: Rev. Ed Den Haan (519) 824-4120, ext. 2392
edenhaan@uoguelph.ca

Through God's Spirit, we grow together in Christ.



HURON CAMPUS MINISTRY OF WATERLOO
Classis Huron

The Church in the Woods
Waterloo Christian Reformed Church
warmly invites all Waterloo area students, their parents and friends, to a
Student Welcome Service
Sunday, Sept. 13, 1998, at 10;30 a.m.

After the service, information about Huron Campus Ministry, Grace Chr. Fellowship at the University of Waterloo and the Wilfrid Laurier Group will be presented and an excellent luncheon provided.

Please contact **Chaplain Graham E. Morbey** at **(519) 886-1474 or (519) 884-1970, ext. 2739** for further information and assistance.
The Waterloo Christian Reformed Church is located at **209 Bearinger Road, Waterloo, Ont.**

University and College Students arriving in London, Ont.

You are invited to a **special worship service** to welcome new and returning students at **First Chr. Ref. Church, 513 Talbot St., London, Ont.**, at **11 a.m.**, on **Sunday, Sept. 13, 1998.** Refreshments and introduction to student activities to follow.

The first meeting of the Cornerstone Student Fellowship will take place on **Wednesday, Sept. 16, 1998**, at **511 Coombs Ave., London, Ont**. Please come!

For more information, call Chaplain **Michael Veeneman** at **(519) 438-1242.**

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Woodstock, ON N4V 1G1
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A Quick Course On Wills

(NC)—**What is a will?**
A will is a written legal document made during your lifetime which takes effect upon death and contains instructions on how your affairs are to be handled and how your estate is to be distributed.

Your estate consists of all **real property** (such as land and buildings) and **personal property** (property other than real property such as furniture, cars and jewelry) which you own or have an **interest** in (a right to have a share in that property) at the date of death and which may be disposed of by your will.

Your will is the method you use to **distribute** your property to those loved ones and friends, or favourite organizations such as a health charity or Greenpeace to whom you want to give part of your estate. Recipients of gifts through your will are called **beneficiaries**.

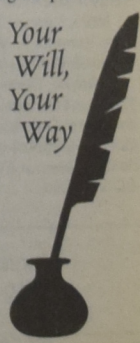
A person who makes a will is called a **testator** if they are male or a **testatrix**, if they are female. If a person dies leaving a will they are said to die testate; a person who dies without leaving a will is said to die intestate.

Functions of a will
Basically there are three major functions that a will performs:

1. First, your will determines how your estate will be divided up and who will benefit; in other words, who will receive what items of your individual property. The only way you can control exactly who will inherit your estate is by preparing a will. The law does not recognize any other method for the disposition of your estate upon your death. Therefore, a spoken promise, or even a written note to your best friend to leave them your prized record collection is not legally enforceable.
2. Your will names and appoints a personal representative called an **executor** (male) or **executrix** (female) who is responsible for carrying out the instructions in your will and winding up your affairs.
3. A third function a will may perform is the appointment of a **guardian** to be responsible for the upbringing and education of your dependent children. This can be a very important function because if you do not name a guardian the court will appoint one for you.

Characteristics of a will
The most important characteristic of a will is that it does not take effect until you die. Therefore, even though you may have made a will, it has no effect while you are still living.

As a result, you can revoke a will at anytime prior to your death. It is not uncommon for people who have made a will to change their minds concerning the provisions in their will. They are free to cancel an existing will and replace it with a new one. Or, if the changes to your will are minor, they can be made with a **Codicil**. A codicil is an amendment to your will which is executed with the same formalities as a will and is as binding and effective as the will itself.



For a free copy of our informative guide, "Questions & Answers About Wills" which discusses these and many other topics about wills please write to Greenpeace, 1726 Commercial Dive, Suite 200, Vancouver, B.C. V5N 4A3.

- News Canada

Classifieds/Events

Miscellaneous	Events	Events

ENVIRONMENTAL TIPS

Vegetation

(NC)—If you have to ride in shallow water, keep watercraft at an idle speed. In coastal waters be aware of low tide, water can get very shallow very quickly, exposing sea grass beds and other delicate vegetation that serve as nursery grounds for many species of fish. Stay away from weeds, grasses and other plants, they can cause problems if they get caught in your engine or pump.

When possible operate well away from shore because wildlife typically inhabit shoreline vegetation. Stay within marked channels when at all possible.

For more useful waterway etiquette and safety information visit www.sea-doo.com on the web.

- News Canada

30th Anniversary

Rev. Allan C. Groen

The **Immanuel Chr. Ref. Church of Cornwall, Ont.**, will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the ordination of its pastor, **Rev. Allan C. Groen**, with a special **10 a.m.** service on **Sunday, Sept. 6, 1998**, followed by a potluck supper. For more information, contact:

Hielkje Veenstra, 3341 Bruce St., Cornwall, ON K6K 1M7. Phone (613) 933-3053.

Calendar of Events

Please submit only brief items. Placement is subject to space availability. Lengthy, multiple-event announcements will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit the material and to charge a nominal, per issue fee per item inserted.

Aug. 28 Retirement open house for Rev. Aren P. Geisterfer, 8-10 p.m., Immanuel CRC (corner Mohawk Rd. & West 5th St.), **Hamilton**, Ont. Sponsored by the McMaster Campus Committee. Info.: (905) 526-7519. (#)

Sept. 8 Special Convocation and Service of Celebration, 8 p.m., Redeemer College Auditorium, **Ancaster**, Ont. The public is most welcome! Info.: (905) 648-2131 (#)

to Sept. 11 A major 15-yr. retrospective art exhibition by George Langbroek. At the Rodman Hall Arts Centre, 109 St. Paul Cr., **St. Catharines**, Ont. Info.: (905) 684-2925.

Sept. 14 35th Anniversary Celebration, Brantford Chr. School, 7 Calvin St., **Brantford**, Ont. From 9:00 - 9:45 a.m. Everyone welcome! (#)

Sept. 19 Camp Shalom's 21st Annual Fall Fair, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., at Camp Shalom, on Hwy. 24A, north of **Paris**, Ont. Info.: (519) 623-4860. (#)

Sept. 19 Praise & Worship Conference, 11.30 a.m. - 4 p.m., led by Colleen and Grace, at the Chr. Ref. Church, **Ancaster**, Ont. Sponsored by the Ancaster CRC. $10 registration (in advance, please). Public praise and worship at 7 p.m. open to all. Info.: Corrie Mulder at (905) 679-2296 or the church. (#)

Sept. 24-26 CLAC/WRF-sponsored conference exploring christian perspectives on shaping the workplace. At the Holiday Inn, **Burlington**, Ont. Plenary speakers: Don Posterski, Harry Antonides, Lee Hardy, Elwin Beukes and Marc Bacon. Free public presentation with Dr. John Bolt on Frid., Sept. 25, on: "Greed, Goodness, and God - Hope for Canada's Bottom Line." Info.: (905) 670-7386 or visit web page: www.interlog.com/~wrf/cwuf.htm

Sept. 25 Celebrating 40 years of Christ-centred education! At Wellandport Christian School, **Wellandport**, Ont. All former students, teachers, supporters and committee members are invited to attend a barbeque, open house and thanksgiving program from 4-10 p.m. Info.: (905) 386-6272. (#)

Sept. 26 Toronto District Chr. High School's 35th Anniversary Celebration Dinner! All friends of TDCH are invited to attend this event at TDCH, **Woodbridge**, Ont. Tickets $35. Info.: (905) 851-1772.

Oct. 4 Dutch worship service led by Rev. Jacob Kuntz, 3 p.m., CRC, 70 Hwy. 53 E., **Ancaster**, Ont.

Oct. 7 Anniversary Convention 1998, Can. Fed. of Chr. Ref. Women, 11 a.m. (note!), Redeemer College, **Ancaster**, Ont. Theme: "Great Is God's Faithfulness. " Speaker: Rev. J. Kuntz. Music: Redeemer Choir & students. Tickets: $20 each. Send stamped, self-addressed envelope with cheque (payable to Convention 1998), to P.O. Box 335, Grimsby, ON L3M 4H8 (#)

Oct. 11 First CRC, **Owen Sound**, Ont. celebrates its 50th anniversary! Variety program on Friday. Homecoming tea/dinner on Saturday. Special service on Sunday. Info.: Linda DeBoer at (519) 371-6192. (#)

Oct. 17 "A Day of Encouragement and Training" (for deacons, elders and other caregivers) at Hamilton District Chr. High School, **Ancaster**, Ont. Theme: "Follow the Way of Love!" Featuring 54 workshops, including special sessions for elders and caregivers. Also six workshops geared especially towards persons with a disability and their caregivers. Cost $40. Contact your deacons for a registration form, or call Diaconal Ministries at (905) 646-4511. (#)

Oct. 17 York Music Fest, featuring from Holland: Martin Zonnenberg (organist) and Marjolein de Wit (flutist), and from Canada: Willem van Suijdam (organist) and Heather Harpell (soloist), at 7:30 p.m., Maranatha CRC, **York**, Ont. Info.: (905) 772-3700.

Nov. 6 Christian Festival Concert by the choirs and brass of the O.C.M.A., Leendert Kooij, director. Guest artists: Andre Knevel, Sander van Marion, Lisette Emmink, the Kooij sisters, and the Concert Band "Euphonia." At 8 p.m., Roy Thomson Hall, **Toronto**, Ont. Info./tickets: (416) 636-9779. (#)

Nov. 15 Dutch worship service led by Rev. John Klomps, 3 p.m., CRC, 70 Hwy. 53 E., **Ancaster**, Ont.

Nov. 27 Ebenezer CRC, **Jarvis**, Ont. will be celebrating 50 years of service to our God at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Centre, **Port Dover**, Ont. All former and present members are invited to attend. Info.: (519) 587-5069.

Redeemer College

Come and Celebrate with us!

The university community cordially invites the public to join us for the

Opening Convocation

of the academic year and

Celebration

of the amendment to the College's charter enabling Redeemer to confer B.A. and B.Sc. degrees to its graduates.

The Service of Celebration will take place in the

Redeemer College Auditorium on Tuesday, September 8 at 8 p.m.

777 Garner Road E.(Hwy#53), Ancaster, ON, L9K 1J4, (905) 648-2131

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Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada

NC

Anniversary Convention 1998

of the Canadian Federation of Christian Reformed Women

"Great is God's Faithfulness"

Speaker: **Rev. J. Kuntz, Brampton**
Musical Contributions: **Redeemer Choir and students**
Place: **Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ontario**
Date: **October 7, 1998**
Time: **11 o'clock** (note change of time)
Price: **$20 per ticket**

To order tickets (till Sept. 25, 1998) send stamped self-addressed envelope with cheque payable (only) to:
CONVENTION - 1998, P.O. Box 335, Grimsby, ON L3M 4H8

News

Christian businesses call for better, not bigger, banks

Alan Doerksen

OTTAWA — Bigger is not better, according to many members of the Canadian Christian Business Federation (CCBF) who are concerned about possible mergers between several of Canada's major banks.

Recently, CCBF surveyed its members about implications of the proposed mergers. Most respondents came out against the mergers, which does not surprise Hans Vander Stoep, executive director of CCBF. Most of those opposed were people running small, local businesses, he reports.

WORLD BOOK PHOTO

Will customers benefit from mergers of Canada's big banks?

Respondents offered suggestions to Canada's major banks on how to improve their services. One person called for "more personal, local service; better service and fees; better hours open. We need better banks, not bigger."

Another respondent commented, "Service has become impersonal. Changes in personnel are so frequent no one knows your business anymore."

Canadian banks need "less risk aversion and more assistance in running a sound business — more than just the numbers," wrote one respondent.

Another person stated that foreign banks need to increase in Canada, something Vander Stoep agrees with. For about 30 years, Canada has had restrictions on the role of foreign banks in the country. But Vander Stoep calls for the federal government to lift these restrictions. This would make the Canadian banking market more competitive.

Vander Stoep believes bank mergers will hurt small businesses and small communities. "If there [are fewer] players, there's less competition," he explains. "It's much more difficult to get a loan."

Regional credit unions are a better alternative to big banks because they have more local involvement by shareholders, says Vander Stoep.

But Canada's major banks are essentially businesses owned by what Vander Stoep calls "absentee shareholders." Such shareholders are only concerned about getting a good return on their investment, he says.

Here are some key responses from CCBF's survey:

- 86 per cent said No to the statement: "Larger banks will give me easier access to capital";
- 86 per cent said bank mergers are not good for businesses of their size;
- 70 per cent said bank mergers are not necessary to enable Canadian banks to be more competitive;
- 93 per cent don't think that mergers will improve day-to-day personal service at their bank;
- 86 per cent don't believe that mergers will result in lower service fees.

Banks have social responsibilities

Another group concerned about bank mergers, and vocal in its opposition to them is the Canadian Community Reinvestment Coalition (CCRC). The coalition consists of 84 agencies, including Citizens for Public Justice, Mennonite Central Committee of Alberta, the Canadian Labour Congress and the National Council of Women of Canada.

"We have an agenda of bank accountability reforms," explains Duff Conacher, chairperson of CCRC. "Our agenda is for better banks, not bigger banks."

CCRC has been in touch with the Finance Minister about its concerns and has also sent recommendations to the federal taskforce that is studying the issue of bank mergers.

If approved, the mergers would simply tighten the banks' stranglehold on the market, states Conacher. "The banks simply cannot prove that the mergers are necessary or will benefit Canadians. And given the banks' poor record of customer service, why should we let them get bigger?"

CCRC points out in a recent position paper that Canada's "Big Five" banks (Royal, CIBC, Bank of Montreal, Scotiabank and Toronto Dominion) are the largest corporations in Canada, based on total value of their assets. Each of these bank's assets are greater than the federal government's annual revenues.

CC FILES

Hans Vander Stoep

Conacher believes Canada's banks have an obligation "to serve all Canadians fairly and well." He sees banks as being like public utilities, and having similar responsibilities to serve the public.

Human-created resource

CCRC's position paper entitled "Ending Power Without Accountability" explains this in more detail: "Public utilities ... are granted the significant privilege of usually almost exclusive rights to generating and exploiting a natural resource. Similarly, banks have been given the significant privilege of playing the major role in generating and exploiting a human-created resource, namely money. Both utilities and banks are in a position of public trust with regard to the resources they manage."

CCRC is calling for a moratorium on bank mergers and expansions until the government's promised changes to foreign bank entry laws and new bank disclosure, reinvestment and accountability laws have been in place for two years. After that time period, if foreign banks provide significant competition to Canada's big banks and the banks have proven that they serve all Canadians fairly and well, the government could then reconsider bank mergers.

"The onus is on Finance Minister Paul Martin to act in the interests of the majority of Canadians, who have made it clear that they oppose the mergers," Conacher insists.

CCRC is distributing 70,000 copies of an educational pamphlet across the country urging Canadians to write to their MP, Martin and the federal task force on banking issues asking them to stop the mergers and enact the bank accountability measures proposed by CCRC.

Positive potential

Recently, the C.D. Howe Institute, a Toronto-based think tank, published a paper which generally supports bank mergers. The institute sees the mergers as having positive potential mainly because of possible financial savings for customers. Because technological changes have made face-to-face bank transactions less necessary, fewer bank branches are needed, and mergers would allow banks to cut back on branches and salaries, states the institute.

Jobs would be lost in this process, but the institute responds, "It is inappropriate to suggest that the banks have an obligation to avoid staff reductions that would improve efficiency in the Canadian economy. Such a requirement would entangle the business of banking with social policy.... Government has better ways to handle social policy."

But Vander Stoep responds, "I don't buy that. Are we not all agents of social policy?" Many businesses, especially Christian ones, have mission statements spelling out their acceptance of this responsibility, he insists.

Conacher agrees, saying he and CCRC very much believe banks have a responsibility to provide jobs, among other services, to Canadians.

But like CCBF and CCRC, the C.D. Howe Institute agrees that bigger is not necessarily better. In its paper on mergers, the institute states: "Size matters only insofar as economies of scale reduce operating costs, producing savings that are passed on to customers."

The institute also calls on the government to remove restrictions to foreign banks in Canada, a move with which Vander Stoep and Conacher agree.

News Digest

Rideau Canal too clean

OTTAWA (CP) — The Rideau Canal is so clean that Ottawa residents are outraged. Algae used to fill the canal and block the sun's rays, but now, sunlight is penetrating to the bottom, stimulating massive vegetation growth which impedes boating and "looks bad."

The irony is not lost on Paul Hamilton, a research assistant at the Canadian Museum of Nature who is working on the problem. "A lot of people are complaining they want a cleaner canal, but they don't understand that is what they have," he says. "We need to find a happy medium where you can have biological diversity, but you have an area where boats can travel."

Onward Christian Soldier?

BALTIMORE — U.S. Army veteran Rob Shiflett is being shot down by critics because of the name of his new gun shop: Christian Soldier. Some Baltimore ministers don't like the name, but Shiflett isn't budging. His own pastor likes it, he says.

Rev. David Asplin, pastor of a church down the block, told the *Baltimore Sun* he is troubled by the linking of Jesus and firearms. "I'm concerned about the use of violence in our society, and certainly I don't find it something that Christians would promote as a means to solving any human problem."

But Shiflett argues, "All throughout the Bible,... God was always supportive of His people being strong."

No speeders, no money

MACKS CREEK, Mo. (AP) — The town of Macks Creek, Mo., is dying for lack of speeding tickets. For years, the town was a notorious speed trap. The police in this no-stop-light town of 272 were said to spend most of their time pulling people over for speeding — some 2,900 traffic tickets a year. By 1994, more than 75 per cent of the town's annual revenue came from court fines.

But in 1995, the state stepped in and passed a law that limited the amount of income a municipality could earn from traffic tickets to 45 per cent of total revenue. Three years later, Macks Creek is broke and its police officers have been laid off.